

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF
Famous Men

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF
Famous Men

By HENRY THOMAS AND
DANA LEE THOMAS

Blue Ribbon Books
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1944
BY GARDEN CITY PUBLISHING CO., INC.

1946
BLUE RIBBON BOOKS

Contents and Illustrations



INTRODUCTION	vii
ALEXANDER THE GREAT	3
<i>Illustration facing page 22</i>	
MARCO POLO	17
<i>Illustration facing page 23</i>	
COLUMBUS	35
<i>Illustration facing page 54</i>	
BENVENUTO CELLINI	49
<i>Illustration facing page 55</i>	
SIR WALTER RALEIGH	61
<i>Illustration facing page 86</i>	
SHAKESPEARE	79
<i>Illustration facing page 87</i>	
SÁMUEL JOHNSON	93
<i>Illustration facing page 118</i>	

CONTENTS

GOETHE	105
<i>Illustration facing page 119</i>	
SIMON BOLIVAR	121
<i>Illustration facing page 150</i>	
DISRAELI	137
<i>Illustration facing page 151</i>	
GARIBALDI	161
<i>Illustration facing page 182</i>	
KARL MARX	173
<i>Illustration facing page 183</i>	
SUN YAT-SEN	185
<i>Illustration facing page 214</i>	
LENIN	199
<i>Illustration facing page 215</i>	
MARCONI	215
<i>Illustration facing page 246</i>	
ENRICO CARUSO	227
<i>Illustration facing page 247</i>	
PADEREWSKI	243
<i>Illustration facing page 254</i>	
MUSTAPHA KEMAL ATATURK	261
<i>Illustration facing page 255</i>	
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW	275
<i>Illustration facing page 270</i>	
WINSTON CHURCHILL	287
<i>Illustration facing page 271</i>	

INTRODUCTION

like Kemal Ataturk and Sun Yat-sen, state leaders like Disraeli and Churchill, and all-round lovers of living and striving like Benvenuto Cellini.

A group as varicd as human endeavor. Yet they all have one thing in common—that subtle essence of personality, that “perfume of heroic thought or deed” which the poets call fame. “If you would be famous after you are dead,” said Benjamin Franklin, “either write things worth reading or do things worth writing.”

H. T.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Important Dates in Life of Alexander the Great

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| C. | 356—Born at Pella. | 334-32—Conquered Asia Minor. |
| | 343—Became pupil of Aristotle. | 332-31—Conquered Egypt. |
| | 340—Quelled (at the age of 16) uprising of hill tribes on Macedonian border. | 331—Invaded Persia. |
| | 336—Became king of Macedonia. | 328—Reached the borders of Hindu Kush. |
| | 335—Subjugated Greece. | 328-26—Invaded the outposts of India. |
| | | 326-23—Consolidated his conquests in Asia. |
| | | 323—Died. |

Alexander the Great

356 B.C.—323 B.C.



HE WAS the savage heir to a savage throne. His father's banquets, writes the historian Athenaeus, "were, because of their riotousness and their violence, veritable workshops of war." King Philip corrupted everybody who came into contact with him. "Even if a man was not a ruffian upon his arrival," observes another ancient historian, Theopompus, "he soon became one under King Philip's life and habits." It was the ambition of Philip to turn the entire world into his private hunting ground.

Like father, like son. When he was only fourteen, Alexander acted as regent of Macedonia (modern Bulgaria) in the absence of Philip who had marched away upon one of his military campaigns. A delegation of Persian noblemen came to visit the young prince. They brought with them a royal gift—the stick and the ball used by the Persian king when he played his favorite game of polo. Alexander picked up the gift. "This ball," he said to the Persian ambassadors, "is the world. And I am the stick that will smash it around to my heart's content."

II

THE GLORY that was Greece, the age of the great sculptors and philosophers and poets, had faded into the twilight of aggression and jealousy and bloodshed between city and city and state and state. The best men were perishing upon the battlefields, and the entire civilization of Greece was dangerously close to death.

Some of the statesmen, like the Athenian Isocrates, realized the danger. In order to save the life of their country, they advocated a United States of Greece. Their idea was excellent, but they called upon the wrong man to execute it. Philip accepted the invitation of Isocrates to weld the Greeks into a unit. He raised a Macedonian army, swept down upon the war-weary Greek peninsula, and organized all the independent Greek cities into a United States—of Greek slaves.

King Philip was a genius as an organizer of empires. Everywhere his word was law—except in his own household. His wife Olympias, the mother of Alexander, was a mystical fanatic who teetered on the border of insanity. She considered it her religious duty to make the life of Philip, whom she heartily detested, as unhappy as possible. In order to vex him, she told him that Alexander was not his son, but the offspring of a God who had come to her at night in the form of a serpent. Whatever Philip may have thought of this fairy tale, Alexander half-believed it throughout his life. Again and again he insisted that he was of divine origin.

Life in the royal palace of Macedon was a succession of rituals, dissensions and orgies. Alexander, egged on by his mother, showed no respect for Philip. At one of the royal banquets, when father and son were both stupefied with drink, Philip attempted to stab Alexander because the boy had insulted him. He was too drunk, however, to make a perfect lunge.

As Philip reeled to the ground, his son transfixed him with a verbal stab. "Look!" he sneered to the assembled guests. "Here is

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

the man who would leap from Europe into Asia. Yet when he tries to step from one couch to another, you see him sprawled out on the floor!"

III

SUCH was the atmosphere in which Alexander grew up. His father tried, indeed, to give him a good education. He hired the best tutors for Alexander. Rhetoricians, grammarians, poets, musicians, philosophers—all came to the palace and tried to tame the savage royal whelp into the semblance of a civilized man. Among his more famous tutors was Aristotle, that amazing miracle of learning who within a single head contained the knowledge of a hundred men, and who could write and talk with equal authority upon such a diversity of subjects as politics, drama, poetry, physics, medicine, psychology, history, logic, astronomy, ethics, natural history, mathematics, rhetoric, biology, and what not. But Aristotle made very little impression upon Alexander, or upon any of the other members of the royal family. Philip, Alexander and Olympias affected a superficial veneer of Greek culture. At bottom, however, they remained throughout their life an unholy trinity of barbarian wildcats. When Philip was ready to start out on his first campaign against Persia, he was assassinated—at the direct instigation, it was said, of Olympias. At his funeral Olympias insisted that the murderer should receive the same honors as the murdered king.

IV

ALEXANDER was twenty years old when Philip died. He found himself heir to a well-trained army, all equipped and ready to descend upon the Orient. The soldiers were merely waiting for a leader who possessed the imagination, the egotism, the recklessness and the skill to undertake the subjugation of the world. Alexander had all these characteristics in abundance, and to spare. He lost no time in proving his ability to all those who might have entertained any doubts about it. He quickly subdued the

tribes to the north of Macedonia and then he marched upon the Greeks who, at the news of Philip's death, had tried to break away from the Macedonian yoke. He besieged the city of Thebes and captured it without any difficulty. In order to show the power of his crimson fist to the rest of the Greeks, he destroyed the entire city, put six thousand of its inhabitants to the sword, and sold thirty thousand as slaves in the public markets.

The spoils that he had captured from the city he divided among his officers. "What," asked one of them, "are you keeping for yourself?"

"My hopes," replied Alexander.

And then he proceeded to the relentless fulfilment of his hopes. He marched southward from Thebes into the other cities of Greece. Wherever he went, he was met with false flatteries and with costly gifts. The Greek rebels had learned their lesson. They proclaimed him their leader and they were ready to follow him on his expedition into the vast territories of the Orient.

His triumphant march through Greece, however, met here and there with a rebuff of a quite unexpected sort. A few of the Greeks still retained enough of their independence to tell him what they thought of him. When he arrived at Corinth he was greeted, as elsewhere, with hypocritical shouts of welcome. But he was disappointed not to see Diogenes, the Gynic, among the flatterers. Diogenes was the one man in Corinth whom he most admired and whose admiration he was most anxious to win. But the old cynic remained quietly in one of the suburbs. The pride of conquerors and the pomp of kings were matters of the utmost indifference to him. He made no attempt to see the great Macedonian procession or to meet the victorious king.

Since Diogenes refused to come to Alexander, Alexander decided to go to Diogenes. He found him lying alone in the sun. With a patronizing show of friendliness he asked Diogenes whether there was anything he could do for him. "Yes," replied the old codger, "You can do me a great favor by removing yourself from between me and the sun."

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Instead of punishing him for his boldness, Alexander left him to his cynical meditations. It was not in vain that the young king had been a pupil of Aristotle. "If I were not Alexander," he observed to one of his cronies, "I would choose to be Diogenes." To which observation Diogenes, had he taken the trouble to reply, might have said, "If I were not Diogenes, I would choose to be anyone *but* Alexander."

V

ALEXANDER'S MILITARY AMBITION soon drove all philosophy and, indeed, all common sense out of his head. He was a very devil for recklessness. Where others feared to tread, Alexander rushed in. He gambled against the impossible, and he generally won out. If a river was too rapid to be crossed, Alexander crossed it. If an enemy was to be dislodged from the summit of a hill that was not to be scaled, he scaled the hill and put the enemy to flight. Obsessed with the superstitious belief that he was a son of Zeus, he felt convinced that Heaven itself was fighting on his side. And he passed this conviction on to everybody else. "Once," writes Plutarch, quoting a contemporary of Alexander as his authority, "the waves of the Pamphilian seacoast, which ordinarily came to the very edge of the cliffs, retired suddenly of their own accord to afford him passage." When he besieged the city of Tyre, the inhabitants tied down the statue of Apollo with ropes and nailed it to the pedestal, in order that the God might not be able to desert them and go over to Alexander. But, Plutarch informs us, Apollo paid no attention to the Tyrian efforts to keep him in their midst. In spite of the nails and the ropes that kept his body fastened down among the Tyrians, he fought in spirit on the side of Alexander.

With amazing rapidity Alexander conquered one Asiatic country after another. His almost incredible successes had paralyzed his enemies into a state of impotent despair. "What is the good of fighting against a warrior descended from the skies?" He was

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

reported as being here, there and everywhere at once. Most of the armies that had been raised against him were ready to give up the struggle even before they met him on the battlefield. They were defeated not so much by Alexander, as by the very *fear* of Alexander. *

He was a brilliant madman. Afflicted with the insane delusion that he was a God, he insisted upon being worshiped like a God. On one occasion, when he was struck in the thigh, he expressed amazement to see that his blood was the ordinary blood of mortals, instead of the *ichor* which was popularly supposed to be coursing through the veins of the immortal Gods. In the midst of battle he often called upon Zeus and the other divinities to come to his aid—reminding them, in case they had forgotten it, that he was their kinsman—indeed, the *greatest* of their kinsmen.

His megalomania was astounding, even to his most ardent admirers. He looked into the mirror of his own vanity—we have seen it recently in men like Hitler and Hirohito—and he saw reflected in it a visitor from Heaven walking among the pygmies of the earth. He insisted that he was the master ruler of a master race. When he departed from the borders of India after he had decided not to invade that country, he left behind him a number of bridles and helmets and other bits of armor that had been purposely manufactured several sizes too big. The Hindus must be made to believe that the Macedonians were an army of gigantic men and horses. Everything that belonged to him he considered sacred. He named a new city in Asia after his horse, and another after his dog. He was an exhibitionist of the most obnoxious type. When his army marched in triumph through Carmania, he had a banquet prepared upon a huge platform that was drawn by eight horses. He sat upon this moving platform, eating and drinking with his companions, while the parade passed through the city and the Orientals gazed with astonishment at the splendid vulgarity of the Macedonian feast.

Yet in Asia, as in Europe, there were those who saw him in his true color and his true size. On the banks of the Indus there lived

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

a group of philosophers called the *gymnosophists* (naked wise men). Alexander sent one of his officers to the leader of these men with the message that "the Great King of Macedonia wishes to speak to you."

"But I," replied the philosopher, "do not wish to speak to the Great King of Macedonia."

"Do you dare thus to insult the Son of Zeus?"

"Tell Alexander that he is no more the son of Zeus than I am. Or tell him rather that both of us are the sons of Zeus, as are all men who are born into this world."

Whereupon Alexander's messenger resorted to bribes and threats. But the *gymnosophist* remained imperturbable. "Alexander can neither cheer me nor scare me. There is nothing I wish to gain, for I have already my philosophy; and there is nothing I fear to lose, for in taking my life Alexander will but release a precious soul from a worthless body."

"I shall advise Alexander," said the messenger haughtily, "to waste no time upon you but to go on with the conquest of the earth."

"Alexander," said the naked philosopher, "has already conquered his mortal share of the earth. Six feet."

VI

ALEXANDER'S TEMPER was as unpredictable as the New England weather. He passed from gentleness to ferocity without a moment's notice. When his troops were crossing the desert, he refused a drink brought to him by one of his soldiers. The general, he said, must suffer thirst along with the rest of the army. But when his cupbearer unintentionally offended him, he seized the poor fellow by the hair and dashed out his brains against the wall. One day, as he was sailing down the Euphrates, a gust of wind blew the royal fillet off his head and into the water. A sailor dived immediately overboard and rescued the fillet before it sank out of sight. Fearing that it might be spoiled if he dragged it

through the water, the sailor placed it upon his head as he swam back toward the galley.

"Give him a silver talent for his courage," said Alexander to his steward as the sailor clambered aboard.

And then, turning to his executioner, "Have him killed for his presumption. For no man but Alexander must wear the royal fillet on his head."

Alexander was an incongruous mixture of the artist and the fiend. He read Homer when he was sober and killed his dearest friend, Clitus, in a drunken fit. His repentance over the murder when he sobered up was no less violent than his passion when he murdered him. He wept when his greatest enemy Darius, the king of Persia, died, and he executed large numbers of prisoners—having first cut off their ears and their noses—as a daily diversion. "Consistency," he said, "becomes the character of a man. But I am inconsistent because mine is the character of a God."

And when anyone questioned the godliness of his character, Alexander made short shrift of him. One of his skeptical camp-followers was the philosopher Callisthenes, a nephew of Aristotle. "The Gods," declared Callisthenes, "are justly enraged because the mortal Alexander has dared to usurp their immortal attributes." When these words were brought to Alexander's attention, he decided to put Callisthenes into "his proper place." At a banquet prepared for the occasion, Alexander arranged to pledge each guest in a cup of wine, whereupon the guest was to drain the cup, receive the kiss of friendship and prostrate himself before his "Divine King." When he pledged the name of Callisthenes, Alexander handed him the cup and then turned insolently away without the accompanying kiss. The philosopher, not to be outdone, turned with equal insolence upon his heel and strode away without the necessary obeisance.

This public demonstration of mutual hostility was tantamount to a death sentence for Callisthenes. A few days after the banquet, the philosopher was crucified on the charge of "fomenting a conspiracy against the King's life." Alexander's friends, observes

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Plutarch, "are safer in the activity of his battles than in the idleness of his banquets."

Alexander was reckless of human life. One of his favorite soldiers, who had taken sick, died because he refused to follow the physician's advice. Alexander, with the logic of a madman, ordered the physician to be crucified. And then, as a further outlet to his emotion, he descended upon an unsuspecting city and slaughtered all the inhabitants—"a fitting sacrifice to the memory of my dead friend." Whenever an opposing commander fell into his hands, he cast a pair of dice to decide the man's fate. If the throw was favorable, he dismissed the prisoner with a magnanimous nod; if unfavorable, he strung him up to the nearest tree. His ingenuity in the invention of new tortures for his enemies was nothing short of amazing. Plutarch relates how once he tied down a captured officer between two trees which had been drawn together, and which were then allowed to snap back to their natural position. The violence of the rebound tore the victim in halves; and "each tree, as its branches swung aloft, carried with it a part of the bleeding corpse."

Having regaled himself with this edifying spectacle, Alexander then returned to his Homer. He always carried a de luxe edition of Homer among his most precious belongings. He liked to read the battle scenes in the *Iliad*, he said. They inspired him with a thirst for glory and a love for war.

VII

WHEN he was not fighting or reading Homer, Alexander spent his time in drinking. In his bottles, just as in his battles, this pitiable madman of Macedonia tried to be superhuman. He was not content with the excesses of ordinary mortals. He drank without stint or measure, and then he went about doing mischief like an intoxicated god. At the suggestion of a tipsy courtesan whom he was entertaining at one of his banquets, he topped off the carousals by setting fire to the palace of the Persian king. On an-

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

other occasion he held a Marathon drinking contest, with a golden crown as the prize. The winner succeeded in drinking down twelve quarts of wine; but he died, together with forty-one other contestants, as a result of the debauch.

Alexander himself finally took sick at one of the orgies "which had been kept up all the night and the whole of the following day." The sickness developed into a fever, and a few days later he expired. Alexander was only 33 at the time of his death; but he had lived long enough to devastate more lands, and to inflict more mischief and murder upon the human race, than any other man in ancient history.

VIII

THE sentimental historians have put a halo around the head of Alexander. They have held him up as a model of everything that is great and noble and virtuous in human life. They have called him a founder of cities, a tamer of savage races, and a builder of roads and of commerce between nation and nation.

It is sickening to see a super-brigand like Alexander thus glorified into a saint. He was not at all interested in civilization. He was interested in Alexander and in nothing else. Like a colossus, he wanted to bestride the world. Just before he died, he planned to have an entire mountain carved into a statue of himself, with his left hand holding a city of ten thousand inhabitants and with his right hand pouring a river into the sea. He suffered from a psychopathic lust for power. He built, just as he destroyed, for his own glory, and not for the sake of humanity. Historians make much of the few cities that he founded. What of the many cities that he burned down? It is foolish to maintain that through his wars he sowed the seeds of Greek culture in Asia. He merely sowed there the seeds of hatred, of revenge, and of future wars. It was the thinkers and the poets of Greece—men like Solon and Herodotus and Plato, and not the warriors like Alexander, who brought the civilization of Europe into the Orient. Alexander

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

had no grandiose plans for the organization and the education of the world. He tamed it, just as he had tamed his wild horse Bucephalus, in order that he might saddle it with his throne and ride it to its destruction. His wars, we are told, were a boon to humanity, since they enabled him to cover the trackless wilderness of Asia with a network of roads and trading posts. But is it necessary to *kill* humanity in order to bring it together into a closer unit? Must the ways of friendship between nation and nation be paved with the skeletons of slaughtered men?

Alexander was a congenital paranoiac whose mad career set civilization back a thousand years. His name, written across the world in letters of fire and blood, spelled nothing but disaster for the human race.

MARCO POLO

Important Dates in Life of Marco Polo

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1254—Born in Venice. | 1298—Commanded a ship in expedition against Genoa. Defeated and taken prisoner. |
| 1271—Joined father and uncle on trip to China. | 1298-99—Dictated his Travels to fellow prisoner, Rusticiano. |
| 1275—Reached court of Kublai Khan. | 1299—Set free. |
| 1277—Appointed, as Imperial Agent for Kublai Khan. | 1324—Died, January 9. |
| 1295—Returned to Venice. | |

Marco Polo.

1254-1324



IN THE SUMMER OF 1295, three bedraggled strangers made their way through the streets of Venice. Their faces were bronzed and lined with fatigue. Their backs were bent with the heavy bundles which they carried over their shoulders. Their clothes were in tatters. The dogs barked at their heels, and the people stared. A most curious trio in that city of most curious sights; their like had never been seen before. Italian features, and Oriental manners. And their speech, too, was a peculiar mixture of Italian idiom and Oriental gibberish.

"Who are you?" asked one of the passers-by.

"We are the Polos," replied the youngest of the three—"my father Nicolo, my uncle Maffeo, and myself, Marco Polo."

The Venetian shrugged his shoulders. "The Polos? Never heard of them."

Finally the trio came to a house on the outskirts of the city. "Well," remarked the oldest with a sigh of relief, "we're home at last."

They knocked. A woman opened the door and looked at them belligerently.

"We are the Polos, returned home after our long absence."

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

"Returned from Hell most likely! Why, the Polos have been gone and dead these twenty-six years."

"But we *are* the Polos."

"Get along, you beggars, or I'll call the police!"

"We're not beggars. On the contrary, we've brought gifts with us."

"Gifts?"

"Yes," said the youngest, "millions of them!"

The woman, a distant relative of the Polos, admitted them reluctantly into the house. After much questioning, she became convinced that these men were not impostors. She summoned the other relatives from various parts of the city and prepared a banquet in honor of the trio "returned from the dead."

The guests are seated at the table. But the Polos have not as yet entered. They are off in their room dressing. "I wonder what strange Oriental costume they are going to put on?" remarks one of the guests—a dandy with an eye for finery.

And now the Polos make their appearance. What a dazzling display! Trailing robes of crimson satin, fold upon fold, embroidered with silver threads. "Do you like them?"

A thunder of *oh's* and *ah's* for reply.

"Then you shall have them."

They leave the room and return in a few minutes. And now they are dressed in long robes of crimson damask embroidered with cloth of gold. Their former robes of satin have been cut up into strips and are now being distributed among the guests.

They sit down to their banquet. Wines, antipasto, ravioli, more wines.

And now, before the main dishes are put on—"How would you like these *damask* cloths?"

Another frenzied chorus of delight. Again the Polos leave the room; and upon their return, they are dressed in robes of crimson velvet fastened together with diamond clasps. Once more their former garments have been cut up into strips and, in accordance with the Mongolian custom, are being divided among the guests.

MARCO POLO

And now the banquet is over. Embraces, dances, singing, more embraces and more wine. In the confusion, the Polos have again disappeared. When they come back, their crimson garments are ready for distribution. But the Polos are now dressed in the rags which they have worn upon their arrival.

"What next?"

Marco Polo orders the servants to leave the room. And then, taking a sharp knife from the table, he rips open the seams of the tatters. And, Santa Maria! What a cataract of jewels pours out before the astonished eyes of the spectators! Rubies, sapphires, emeralds, carbuncles, diamonds, cornelians, amethysts, brilliants and pearls!

"How many of these have you collected, Messer Marco Polo?"

"Millions and millions of them!"

"And you must have had many an interesting adventure in collecting them."

"Yes, I've had millions of adventures!"

Marco Polo always spoke in this extravagant manner. And soon he acquired an affectionate title among the Venetians. They nicknamed him "Marco Millions."

II

THREE YEARS after Marco Polo's return to Venice, he engaged in one of the naval battles between his native city and Genoa. He was taken prisoner by the Genoese; and, in order to while away the tedious hours of his captivity, he entertained his fellow-prisoners, as well as his captors, with the account of his travels in the Orient. A writer by the name of Rusticiano became interested in this story and gathered the material into a travel book. The *Travels of Marco Polo* marks one of the turning points in the history of human relationships. The young Venetian had started for China as a bearer of the "civilization" of the West to the "barbarians" of the East. He came back to Italy as a mes-

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

senger of good will between the equally civilized races of the East and the West.

China, as Marco Polo discovered, possessed a culture as ancient and as beautiful as that of Greece or of Rome. From the Golden Rule of Confucius—"what you would not that others should do unto you, do not unto others"—to the Sacred Principle of Tai-tsung—"let no man persecute another man for his religion, for there are many ways of reaching heaven"—the Chinese sages had inspired their people with a sense of reciprocity toward one another. For almost two thousand years the "Flowery Kingdom" had enjoyed an uninterrupted march of spiritual progress. And of artistic and mental progress as well. In the first four centuries of our Christian era, the Chinese artists created some of the most lovely landscapes that have ever been painted by the hand of man. The delicate carvings, the graceful poetry and the majestic architecture produced during those four hundred years are, even today, things of undying beauty. In the sixth century the Chinese invented printing from wood blocks—almost a thousand years before the invention of printing in Europe. In the same century we find the Chinese employing coal and gas for heating purposes—a method with which the white races did not catch up until twenty-five generations later. Gunpowder, too, was known to the Chinese of the sixth century; although, being a peaceful nation, they took little advantage of this invention of accelerated murder.

From the sixth century to the thirteenth, China stood in the forefront of the world's civilized nations. And then she suffered a temporary relapse, but not for long. The Mongolians, a tribe of restless wanderers who lived in the steppes of Asia and who were related somewhat to the Huns, began to sweep over China in a series of invasions which finally embraced all the vast territory from the Pacific Ocean in the Far East to the Dnieper River in Russia. Under the impetuous leadership of Genghis Khan, the Mongol invaders in an incredibly short time acquired an empire to which the empire of Alexander was but a child's toy.

MARCO POLO

Genghis Khan had the fearlessness of Alexander, the endurance of Caesar, and the simplicity of the primitive Asiatic conquerors. Mare's meat was his favorite food, a pitched tent his palace, and a saddle his throne. He was more eager to conquer than to rule. Yet, unlike most other conquerors, he was neither vindictive nor ferocious. "Under Genghis Khan"—we are quoting H. G. Wells—"we find the completest religious toleration established across the entire breadth of Asia." Instead of imposing his barbarity upon the defeated nations, he absorbed, or rather allowed himself to become absorbed into, their superior civilization. When he conquered the Chinese people, he was in turn conquered by their culture. Unlike the Vandals who had destroyed the civilization of Rome, the Mongolians not only left the civilization of China intact, but adopted it as their own. The grandson of Genghis, Kublai Khan, owed much more to the scholarly traditions of China than he did to the customs of his own barbarian ancestors.

It was at the court of Kublai Khan that Marco Polo, and through him all Europe, became acquainted with the amazing civilization of the Orient.

III

THE mission of Marco Polo to the court of Kublai Khan was partly cultural, partly religious, and largely economic. The teachers of Europe wanted to educate China, the missionaries wanted to convert it, and the merchants wanted to do business with it. Marco Polo's family were among the merchants of Venice. His father, Nicolo Polo, and his uncle, Maffeo Polo, had spent some years as traders in the kingdom of Kublai Khan. When the Mongolian ruler heard that there were two astute European bargainers in his country, he invited them to his court. He had never seen a Christian businessman, and he was curious to know what that "strange animal" looked like.

He took a fancy to the two Venetians. Nicolo was a shrewd, dark man, "a good judge of a jewel and a good judge of a

His brother, Maffeo, was "a big, red-bearded man with a great eye for a horse and a great eye for a woman." Kublai Khan enjoyed their vulgarity, their cocksureness, and their blustering good nature. He discussed business with them, and he found them very keen. He tried to discuss politics and religion with them, and he found them not so keen. He was amused at their efforts to convert him to Christianity. "It is the desire of our Pope," they told him, "to convert all the heathens to the true religion."

"And who is your Pope?"

"He is the earthly vicar of Christ, our God."

"And how does your Pope know that your God is the God of the one true religion?"

To this question the Polos had no ready answer. "We are neither teachers nor priests, but blunt businessmen."

Kublai Khan was amused, and at the same time intrigued. He told them that he might possibly be interested in their religion if he could discuss it with some people who really knew what they were talking about. He therefore suggested that they go back to the Pope and ask him to send to China a hundred teachers of Christianity, "intelligent men acquainted with the Seven Arts, able to enter into controversy, and able clearly to prove to skeptical folk like myself that the law of Confucius is inferior to the law of Christ."

Nicolo and Maffeo Polo started on their mission to Pope Clement IV. But when they arrived in Europe, they found that Clement was dead, and that there was too much dissension within the Church for the immediate election of a new Pope. Impatiently they waited for two years, and then the newly elected Pope (Gregory X) listened coldly to their plea. Instead of giving them a hundred learned men for the conversion of the Chinese, he gave them two uneducated Dominican friars. These two men possessed neither the spiritual conviction nor the physical courage for the journey. Before they had gone many days, they pretended that they were ill and begged to be sent home. "Let the Chinese,

MARCO POLO

for all we care, stew in the Purgatory of their own ignorance."

Nicolo and Maffeo went on without their spiritual allies. But they had taken along with them the son of Nicolo as a possible substitute for the two Dominican friars.

Marco Polo was a likely lad of fifteen. A good head on his shoulders, and a dreamy look in his eyes. "The youngster," said Maffeo to Nicolo, "will make either a businessman or a poet."

"Maybe both," replied Nicolo.

"And he has a fine sense of religion, too. And a tongue that can hit the mark."

"He got that from his mother. We Polos are a blunt and a tongue-tied race."

Maffeo, lost in thought, kept stroking his long red beard. Finally he spoke: "Maybe the child can convert the Great Khan. Who knows?"

"At any rate," concluded Nicolo, "he will be a good help to us in our business."

IV

A JOURNEY of six years across the forests of Europe and over the mountains of Asia. Places that no white man had ever visited before. They passed beyond the peaks of Ararat, "where Noah had anchored his ark at the time of the Great Flood." And they went beyond the ruins of Babel, where the thoughts of men had been confounded because of their too many tongues. And they left behind them the haunts of dragons and the lairs of wild beasts and the habitations of wild men. And they came to the Plateau of Pamir, called "the top of the World," and from there they saw many more mountains and wastelands over which they must travel before they could arrive at the land of the Great Khan. Past the Hills of Salt and the region of Magic Fires and the Valley of the Singing Trees and the Perilous Desert where no river sang. Beyond the cavern of the Old Man of the Mountain, who bewitched the young horsemen of his country and transformed them into assassins to do his bidding. And they

passed through the City of Enticing Women; where many a traveler lingered on until he was bereft of his ambition and his life. And beyond the City of Tangut, where the dead were carried out of the houses through breaches made in the walls. And then across mile after mile of pestilence and desolation and death.

And finally they came to the Great Desert. And here death threatened to put an end to Marco Polo himself. Sand-sifted air for aching lungs, and a glaring sun for fevered eyes. And one day they came to a sand-dune from which there protruded the faces of grinning skeletons—a whole caravan of men who had been shriveled to death in the desert's heat.

And it was here that Marco Polo, exhausted, lay down to die.

V

KUBLAI KHAN had a telegraph system of beating drums. And these drums informed him that three white travelers from the West were approaching his kingdom, and that one of them was mortally sick. Whereupon he sent a caravan into the desert, and brought the three travelers into Cathay, and nursed Marco Polo back into health.

And when Marco Polo opened his eyes, he found himself in the enchanted city of Xanadu, the capital of the Mongolian Empire.

"In Xanadu did Kublai Khan

A stately pleasure dome decree,

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man,

Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground

With walls and towers were girded round:

And there were gardens, bright with sinuous rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery."

MARCO POLO

And at his bedside, nursing him—so legend has it—sat Golden Balls, the daughter of Kublai Khan.

A few weeks of convalescence, seasoned with the sweetness of love—and then Marco Polo aroused himself to the mission for which he had come to China. He must convert the Great Khan.

The Khan listened to him, and thought there was much wisdom and sincerity in his speech, and became converted—not, however, to Christianity but to friendship. He took the young merchant-poet of Venice into his heart. He admitted him into the Imperial Council and dispatched him as his personal envoy to various parts of China.

The relationship between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan was of mutual advantage to two continents. For while the Chinese emperor was impressed with what he heard of Europe, the Venetian traveler was impressed with what he saw of China. Here was a country which, culturally and materially, stood on a par with every other country in the world. In the libraries of China he found books on philosophy, religion, economics, architecture, poetry, painting, music, astronomy, history, government and law. And he found that shortly before his arrival the scholars of China had compiled an Encyclopedia that covered all the above and a thousand other fields of human interest.

And, too, he found among the inhabitants the use of metals and the mining of coal, and the measuring of time by means of sand clocks and water clocks. And he noted—a thing which aroused the admiration of his mind—the use of paper money for currency; and also—a thing which stirred the admiration of his heart—the use of the spiritual currency of good will. He was delighted with "the polish, the courtesy and the respectful familiarity which distinguished their social intercourse . . . Honesty was everywhere conspicuous; their wagons and other property were secure without locks or guards; and if any of their cattle strayed, arrangements were made by which they were speedily recovered."

And he noted among the Chinese, and among their Mongolian

conquerors, the utter absence of religious intolerance. Jews, Christians, Confucians, Buddhists, Mohammedans—all were allowed to pursue unmolested their various ways to heaven, and all their places of worship were equally exempt from taxation.

And Marco Polo noted in China a system of ethics based upon a sensible foundation of enlightened selfishness: "Seek your own pleasure, but do not interfere with the pleasures of others." And he found in China the key to a profound truth—namely, that at the heart of all greatness lies simplicity. "The great man," wrote the Chinese philosopher, Mencius, "is he who never outgrows the heart of a child."

And there was something of that simplicity in the heart of Marco Polo himself. He never outgrew the wonder of a child at the magic of the world he lived in. He described with such gusto the marvels that he saw on his travels that nobody believed him. For several centuries following the publication of his *Travels*, people continued to characterize a falsehood as a "Marco Polo." Yet recent discoveries have proved that practically all of Marco Polo's "extravagant claims" were statements of fact—that "the black stones broken into bits and used as fuel" were nothing more miraculous than coal; that "the nuts which I have seen and which are as large as a man's head" were cocoanuts; that "the country in which there is night for six months of the year" was northern Siberia; and that "the strange peoples, black, white and yellow, with their equally strange customs" were, and still are, to be found in the countries that he visited on his extensive journeys.

But let us look more closely at some of the "amazements and miracles" as described in the *Travels of Marco Polo*.

VI

"To THE southwest of Armenia is the district of Mosul . . . near the confines of which there is a fountain of oil which discharges so great a quantity as to furnish loading for many camels

MARCO POLO

The skeptical generation of Marco Polo regarded this "fountain of oil" as a fantasy. It was not until 1940 that the reality of the Mosul oil fields came dramatically to the attention of a war-ridden world.

* * *

"The inhabitants of India have acquired the knowledge of magical and diabolical arts, by means of which they are enabled to produce darkness, obscuring the light of day to such a degree that persons are invisible to each other, unless within a very small distance . . ."

Modern travelers, while discounting the magic, have observed this phenomenon in certain parts of upper India. They call it the Dry Fog—an obscurity caused by the saturation of the air with the windblown dust.

* * *

"And then we arrived at the Desert of Lop . . . It is asserted . . . that this desert is the abode of many evil spirits which lure travelers to their destruction. If, during the day-time, any person remains behind the caravan, he suddenly hears himself called by name . . . Led away by the call from the direct road, he wanders away into the desert to his death . . . In the night-time the lost traveler is persuaded that he hears the march of a large cavalcade . . . and concluding the sound to be that of the footsteps of his own party, he follows the ghostly noise till daylight when he finds himself in the midst of the wilderness abandoned and alone . . . Marvelous indeed and almost unbelievable are the stories related about these spirits of the desert . . . which are said at times to fill the air with the clashing of cymbals and the beating of drums . . ."

To this day the natives of that region believe in the Evil Spirits of the Desert. The "voices" that reach the ear of the lonely traveler are the hallucinations of the fever resulting from the heat and the thirst. As for the music of the cymbals and the drums, modern explorers have observed that these sounds are produced

by the contraction and the cooling of the sand in the sand-dunes of the desert.

* * *

"The men of Kamul are addicted to pleasure . . . When strangers arrive at their city, it affords them the highest gratification. They order their wives and their daughters and their sisters to indulge their guests in every wish, whilst they themselves depart from their homes . . . They do this because they are considerate of strangers who, after the perils and fatigues of a long journey, stand in need of relaxation . . ."

Recent travelers have again and again observed this custom among certain tribes of Asia.

* * *

"His Majesty (of Turkestan) has eagles which are trained to catch wolves, and such is the size and the strength of these eagles that no wolves, however large, can escape from their talons . . ."

Travelers in Turkestan have reported that eagles are thus employed in this country even at the present time.

* * *

"The people of Kardandan have the following singular custom: As soon as a woman is delivered of a child . . . her husband immediately takes her place in the bed and looks after the infant for forty days . . . whilst the woman attends to the household duties, carries food to the husband in his bed, and nurses the infant at his side . . ."

To this day the selfsame custom prevails in certain sections of India, Borneo and Siam.

* * *

"There is a curious custom in the province of Karazan. Whenever a stranger of superior quality, whether physical or spiritual, happens to lodge in the house of one of the inhabitants of this province, he is murdered during the night—not for the sake of his money, but in order that the spirit of the murdered man may

MARCO POLO

remain forever in this house, to guide and to bless it in all its concerns . . .”

* * *

“In the land of the Great Khan it is the custom, at the funeral processions of the princes, for the mourners to sacrifice all such persons as they meet on their way, saying to them: ‘Enter into the next world, there to attend upon your deceased lord.’ Upon the occasion when Mongou Khan was escorted to his burial place, the mourners are said to have slain twenty thousand men.”

* * *

“In the country of Ziamba no young woman can be given in marriage until she has first been approved by the king . . . In 1285, when I (Marco Polo) visited this country, the king had three hundred and twenty-six children, male and female.”

* * *

“On the island of Zanzibar there is an extraordinary type of bird, called a *roc*, which is so large that it can seize an elephant in its talons . . .”

While this is probably an exaggeration, nevertheless there is today in the British Museum an egg which measures more than two gallons in capacity. The egg comes apparently from one of these “Marco Polo” birds.

* * *

And now we come to one of the most interesting of the Marco Polo stories—a legendary miracle which, if not true, at least inspired implicit belief in the poet-merchant of Venice.

“In the year of our Lord 1255,” writes Marco Polo, “there lived in Bagdad a wicked Calif who was bent upon exterminating all the Christians within that city . . . One day he summoned them and propounded to them the question as to whether they believed everything that they read in their Gospel. They replied that they did. ‘Very well, then,’ said the Calif, ‘you shall prove to me the power of your belief.’ And he quoted to them the fol-

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

following passage in the Gospel—*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove.* And then the Calif went on, and said: 'I give you ten days, before the end of which you must either, through the power of your Lord Jesus, remove the mountain now before you, or else embrace the law of Mohammed. And failing these two alternatives, you must expect, every one of you, to be put to death.'

"The Christians, trembling for their lives, prayed to the Lord to grant them the aid of His mercy. And the Lord answered their prayer, and directed their Bishop, in a dream, to seek out a certain cobbler—whose name is not known—having only one eye, who through Divine Grace would be able to remove the mountain . . .

"Having sought out the cobbler, they found him a man of strict morals, pure in mind and faithful to his God, regularly attending the Mass and other divine services, fervent in charity and rigid in the observance of the fasts . . . It had once happened to him that a beautiful young woman who came to his shop to be fitted for a pair of shoes, accidentally exposed a part of her leg, the beauty of which excited within him a fleeting sinful thought. Remembering the words of the Gospel, where it is said, 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into Hell Fire,' he immediately, with a sharp knife, scooped out his right eye. Such was the fervor of his faith . . .

"And now the day appointed by the Calif arrived . . . and the pious cobbler, in the presence of the assembled multitude including the Calif himself, knelt before the mountain and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, humbly besought his Creator that He would take compassion upon His faithful Christians and confound the infidels. And having concluded his prayer, he cried in a loud voice: 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I command thee, O mountain, to remove thyself!'

MARCO POLO ,

"Whereupon, lo and behold, the mountain moved and the earth trembled to its foundations . . . The Calif was struck with terror and secretly embraced Christianity, always wearing a cross which after his death was found upon him concealed under his royal robe . . ."

VII

MARCO POLO, together with his father and his uncle, remained in China for twenty years. They had found a warm place in the heart of Kublai Khao. The Great Khan refused them but a single request—that he accept the Christian faith. Although he entertained the greatest esteem for this faith, nevertheless he insisted that it was but one of several ways of salvation. "There are four great Prophets who are revered and worshiped by the different classes of mankind. The Christians honor Jesus Christ as *their divinity*; the Saracens, Mohammed; the Jews, Moses; and the Idolaters, Sogomombarkan. I honor and respect all four of them, and call to my aid whichever of them is in truth Supreme."

And now the Great Khan was growing old, and the Polos feared that after his death they might not find such great tolerance and respect in the kingdom of Cathay. And so they asked the Khan's permission to return to their native land. At first he was loath to let them go, for he had grown too deeply attached to them. But finally he gave them his reluctant consent. The Khan of Persia, grandson of the brother of Kublai Khan, had lost his wife; and Kublai requested the Polos to travel to the land of the Mongolians and to bring back from there a new bride for his sorrow-stricken kinsman. "But be sure to return to me," implored the Great Khan, "when your mission is fulfilled."

Thus he spoke, though he knew in his heart that he was looking for the last time upon his Venetian friends.

And the Polos left the palace of the Khan and never came back.

VIII

WHEN Marco Polo was released from the military prison of Genoa, he married a Venetian woman and became the father of three daughters. And then his adventurous life trailed off into the anticlimax of old age.

Seventy years old now. Marco Polo is on his deathbed. One final adventure—perhaps greater than all the rest? His friends beseech him, for the salvation of his soul, to retract some of the “falsehoods” which he has related in his book. But to the end he insists upon the truthfulness of his story. “What I have told you is not half of what I have seen.”

COLUMBUS

Important Dates in Life of Columbus

- | | |
|--|--|
| 51—Born at Genoa. | |
| 70-72—Engaged in trade at Genoa. | |
| 76—Went to England. | |
| 78—Married Felipa Perestrello. | |
| 1479—Corresponded with Toscanelli about the possible roundness of the earth. | |
| 1482—Tried to interest King John II of Portugal in voyage of discovery. | |
| 1492—April 17, signed agreement with Ferdinand and Isabella for voyage of discovery. | |
| August 3, set sail into the Unknown. | |
| October 12, discovered the New World. | |
| 1493—March 15, returned to Spain. | |
| September 24, started on second voyage across the Atlantic. | |
| 1496—June 11, returned again to Spain. | |
| 1498—May 30, started once more for New World. | |
| 1499—Sent as prisoner in chain by Bobadilla back to Spain. | |
| 1502—Restored to royal favor; started on fourth and last great voyage. | |
| 1504—Returned to Spain. | |
| 1506—May 20, died. | |

Christopher Columbus

1451-1506



YOUNG CHRISTOPHER—he had been named after the patron saint of travelers—was serving wine to the customers in his father's tavern. A motley crowd of sailors and adventurers. French traders in silks and satins; Irish rovers with daggers in their eyes and laughter on their lips; Muscovite merchants, their unkempt beards agitated in lively conversation; Spanish cavaliers with long lean bodies and long lean swords; Moorish seamen, ebony statues of volcanic lava; Palestinian jobbers with hooked noses and shrewd kindly eyes; Greek courtesans, disturbing creatures with soft voices, soft skins, and hair the flame of the sunrise. The babel of sounds and sights and passions that were Genoa in the Year of Our Lord, 1470.

And the arguments that they had, and the stories that they told! About the Green Island of Barbary, whose oysters contained a fluid that cured lepers. About the cliffs of basalt in Madeira, a strange land that produced reeds of sugar. And beyond these, and past the Pillars of Hercules—said these outlandish adventurers—lay the island of Atlantis, wider than Europe and Africa combined—a kingdom of fabulous cities and fabulous riches and the most ravishing women in the world. And

beyond Atlantis lay still other islands that-contained still greater wonders.

And there were tales about a region beyond all these—the Enchanted Isles. “Nobody within our generation”—it was a Spanish sailor who was telling the story—“has ever seen these Islands, for a spell has been cast upon them. Long years ago, when the Moors were laying waste to Europe, a Spanish bishop sailed to these islands for refuge. And there he lived for a time; and when he departed, he cast an enchantment upon the islands, so that never again shall they be visible to mortal eye until all kingdoms of Europe have been embraced within the Catholic fold.”

And how, if no one had ever seen these islands, could anyone know of their existence? Simply enough, answered the sailor. “I myself, and many others, have seen flocks of land-birds flying over the sea from the Enchanted Isles. And I have seen fragments of sweet-scented forests floating against our ship. And this, let me tell you, is no fairy tale. Why, King Charles of France has had his reading room at the Louvre paneled with this fragrant wood of the Enchanted Isles.”

And more strange stories about the lands that lay even beyond the Enchanted Isles. The Land of Gypango, for instance. “In this land, they say, gold is so plentiful that the people use the grains for scouring their cooking pots . . .”

Young Christopher listened to these stories and thought about them as he lay in bed after the customers had left the tavern. And at such moments a deep yearning filled his soul. How grand it would be if some day he could sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules and go off adventuring after the secrets of those Enchanted Lands!

II

TWENTY YEARS OLD, and Christopher was now a partner in his father's business. Every few months he boarded a sloop and went coasting down to the vineyards along the shore in quest of shipments of wine. He loved the song of the surf and the singing of

COLUMBUS

the wind and the salt sea tang of the air. It was no great tragedy to him, therefore, when his father went bankrupt and left his children—there were four of them besides Christopher—to shift for themselves.

Christopher left Genoa—and drifted away into several years of obscurity. It was the fault of Columbus himself that so little is known of those years. For later on, when he wrote the story of his early life, he was more anxious to be impressive than to be factual. Columbus was not only a sailor but a poet; and his poetical dreams often steered him into the uncharted seas of the imagination. Thus he informs us, probably without foundation, that for a time he served as commander of a pirate crew. In the course of this career, he wrote to King Ferdinand, "the good king Reinol . . . sent me to Tunisia, to capture the galley *La Fernandina*." But—Columbus went on to relate—"on arriving at the harbor of San Pedro, in Sardinia, I learned that the galley was being protected by two ships and a carraca, which so alarmed the crew that they resolved to proceed no farther, but to return to Marseilles . . . Upon which"—and here Columbus describes a trick which he was to employ years later, on his first voyage to America—"I pretended to give in to their wish and to turn about for home—*first, however, having changed the points of the compass*, so that, while all believed that they were sailing for Marseilles, they were really sailing for Tunisia."

Shortly after his career as a pirate—he tells us—he took part in a "bloody naval engagement" out of which he barely escaped with his life. His vessel, hit by "a ball of fire," had hurst into flames. "But, being a good swimmer, and finding myself two leagues from the land, I seized an oar, and by its aid succeeded in reaching the coast."

His next venture—he tells us, still spinning a good part of the story out of his imagination—was a voyage to Iceland. This island was then called *Ultima Thule*, the final shore on the edge of the world. "Yet I, in the year 1477, sailed one hundred leagues beyond the island of Thule."

All these stories, whether truthful or fanciful, combine to give us a vivid picture of the dreamer-pioneer ever on the alert, forever poised to reach out from the security of the known into the dangers of the unknown.

III

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD, and for a spell the adventurousness of Columbus seemed threatened to be submerged under the domesticity of marriage. His restless footsteps had taken him to Lisbon. Here, while kneeling one day at the Convent of Santos, the tall, suntanned and yellow-haired young rover with the dream in his eyes and the dimple in his chin, noticed a young woman who was kneeling at his side. A dark-eyed, dark-haired and dark-skinned little creature with a voluptuous smile. Even in repose she seemed a vision of graceful animation. Their eyes met.

After the services, mutual interrogations about each other from their various friends. This young man? Oh, he's a sailor from Genoa with strange ideas in his head. And this young woman? The daughter of a courtier—half Italian, half Portuguese. Donna Filepa Perestrello. A very pretty name.

They were introduced to each other. Her father too, before he had become a courtier, had sailed the seas with a strange quest in his heart. He had sought, like so many others, to fathom the mystery of the ocean which tumbled, as most people believed, over the edge of the world. But Perestrello, Filepa told Columbus, believed otherwise. He had collected quite a large library of books and manuscripts and maps that dealt with the possibility of unknown lands beyond the lands that were known. And with a new and startling theory. The world, in accordance with this theory, was not flat, but round.

Columbus thought a great deal about this matter. If the world really was round, then by sailing to the west you would come to the east. To the kingdoms described in the *Travels of Marco Polo*. To the jewels and the gold of the Great Khan of Cathay . . .

COLUMBUS

An impossible dream? To the foster-child of St. Christopher, the spirit of derring-do, nothing was impossible.

But for the present he was wrapped up in another dream. Donna Filepa. They were married, and the young Ligurian closed his eyes and sipped the fragrance of his love and rested from his adventures.

And in his spare moments he read the books in his father-in-law's library. And thought.

And before long his thoughts began once more to travel far away from home—all the way around the world. A rival had arisen to tear him away from the arms of Filepa. The lure of the unknown.

And—let it be admitted—the thirst for gold. Columbus was consumed by two passions: the love of adventure, and the yearning for wealth. And, in addition to these, by a third passion—an eagerness, like Marco Polo, to make Christian converts.

These three passions would be fulfilled, Columbus believed, by a single stroke. If only he could get a few ships to sail across the sea—it was a very narrow sea, Columbus thought—he would reach new lands and bring back new wealth and open the way for new souls into the Kingdom of Heaven.

At this time Columbus met an odd sort of fellow—a Galician pilot who had lost an eye in a shipwreck. This man had sailed on a Portuguese vessel with a cargo of merchandise for Flanders. The ship had been driven from its course. Day after day it had scudded before the tempest—westward, ever westward. Finally they had come to a land “far beyond the knowledge of any man.”

The return voyage of the ship was even more terrible than the voyage out. “Without provisions, without water, without strength, one by one my comrades died. At last the ship went down, and I alone am left alive to tell the tale.”

As Columbus kept questioning the sailor, he became more and more convinced that this “new and unknown land” was the eastern coast of Cathay—the land of spices and gold. And he was more eager than ever to seek out this land for himself.

But before he translated his eagerness into a final determination, he wrote for advice to Pagolo Toscanelli, the leading geographer of the day. And Maestro Pagolo sent in reply a warm letter of encouragement and Godspeed. "I learn of your great and magnificent desire to discover the way to the land of spices . . . I send you a marine chart which I have made and which will satisfy your needs . . . Although I know that this chart could best be made, like the world, in the form of a sphere, I have nevertheless decided, for greater clearness and ease, to draw it up in the way used to make marine charts . . .

"Upon the chart I have pointed out the best way *westward* . . . to reach the *eastward* regions that are richest in spices and precious stones . . .

"And he not surprised that I say these regions lie to the *westward*, although commonly they are called *oriental*. For to those who go by sea, these lands will lie always to the West; while he who goes by land will have them always to the East . . .

"This land to which you will come is populous and rich . . . the whole under the rule of one sovereign, called the Great Khan, which means the King of Kings . . .

"It is very fitting that we Latins should search out this land . . . of gold and silver and precious stones and aromatic plants and learned men . . . men who show a disposition to come to terms with the Christians . . .

"My best wishes to you, my dear friend."

A very encouraging letter from a very learned man, And now the time was past for further learning and further letters. The moment for action had arrived.

Columbus was ready for the Great Adventure.

IV

BUT nobody else was ready. To the rest of the world his project was still an impossible dream. He went with it to King John of Portugal, who turned him flatly down. He went to King Ferdi-

COLUMBUS

nand and Queen Isabella of Spain. "Give me a few ships and a handful of men, and I will bring back to you innumerable coffers of gold." The queen hesitated, but the king put an end to her hesitation with a definite *no*.

In the meantime Donna Filepa had died. After a due period of *mourning*, Columbus went on with his quest for men, money and ships. He journeyed to England, to France, and then back again to Spain. Everywhere the selfsame answer—*No!*

"I will bring you gold enough to launch a new crusade against the Saracens."

"No!"

An endless series of wanderings from court to court. Eloquent pleas. Despair.

A brief passionate romance with Beatriz de Arana, "a woman without friend or fortune." They met at Cordova, whirlpool of passion and sunlight and sand. He left her with an infant in her arms, and went on.

He made and sold maps for a living, but his earnings were not enough for the nourishment of his body and his dreams. "At this period," writes a contemporary historian, "deprived of all human support, betrayed by his friends, besieged by poverty, Columbus had fallen into such a state that he was forced to go to a Franciscan monastery near the city of Marchena, as a humble suppliant begging food to sustain his very life."

But he had made friends—a Portuguese shipbuilder, a Jewish financier, a Spanish courtesan who had the ear of the king. And these friends spoke up boldly in his behalf. And when these had shown the way, a number of his other supporters plucked up the courage to speak. And on a midwinter day, as Columbus was dejectedly dragging his footsteps two leagues out of Granada, an alguazil on the gallop overtook him. "The King and the Queen have commanded you to come to them at once!"

Three months later (April 17, 1492) the contracts were signed for the beginning of the Adventure. Columbus was to retain all the glory of whatever conversions he might make, and one-tenth

of the profits from whatever business he might transact—"leaving the other nine parts to the profit of Your Majesties."

There is an Oriental proverb: "The devil laughs at the credulity of the subject and the cruelty of the king." His majesties, as Columbus was to learn later on, were to defraud him both of his profit and of his glory. The entire investment of the Spanish crown in the discovery of America was \$6000. The profits on this investment within a century, in gold alone, amounted to \$1,750,000. And all the reward that Columbus was to get was a prisoner's chains.

But on the day that his ships floated out toward the unknown land (August 3, 1492), his heart was afloat somewhere among the stars.

V

FROM the Journal of Columbus on the first "voyage of his dreams":

Monday, August 6—"The helm of the *Pinta* broke . . . Suspect two mariners, Gomez Rascon and Cristobal Quintero, of conspiracy to turn back . . ."

Thursday, August 9—"The *Pinta* developed a leak. Stopped at Tenerife for repairs . . ."

Sunday, September 9—"Went nineteen leagues and resolved to reckon less than he had gone"—Columbus, in his Journal, always referred to himself in the third person—"so that if the voyage be a long one, his people would not be frightened and discouraged . . ."

Monday, September 10—"Went sixty leagues . . . but computed only forty-eight leagues . . ."

Saturday, September 15—"At the beginning of this night . . . saw a marvelous branch of fire fall from the heavens into the sea . . . Mariners greatly disturbed thereat . . ."

Sunday, September 16—"Saw many tufts of very green grass . . . Land apparently not far away . . ."

Monday, September 17—"Sea water less salty than before

COLUMBUS

. . . Mariners all expectant and joyful . . . Fastest vessels hurried onward . . . Everybody eager to be the first to land . . ."

Sunday, September 23—"Still sailing on the westward course . . . No land in sight . . . Mariners disturbed, saying that . . . the wind would never blow for the return to Spain . . . Always the wind blew westward . . . Mariners muttered they would soon be blown over the rim of the world . . ."

Tuesday, September 25—"Land sighted from the stern of the ship . . . Proved to be only a mirage . . . Sailed on . . ."

Wednesday, October 3—"Rebellion among the mariners . . . Calmed them down . . . Sailed on . . ."

Saturday, October 6—"No land . . . Sailed on . . ."

Thursday, October 11—"Signs of land again . . . petrels . . . a green branch . . . a little twig of dog-roses . . . At these signs everybody breathed and rejoiced . . ."

Another mirage perhaps? Another disappointment, another mutiny? But look at the entry in the Journal made several hours later:

"A sailor by the name of Roderigo de Traina reported that he definitely sighted land . . . At ten o'clock that night the Admiral (Columbus), standing in the forecastle, saw a light, but it was so concealed that he could not declare it to be land . . . Two or three others remarked that they, too, saw this light, and it was like a small wax candle, which rose and fell . . . The Admiral was now certain that they were near land . . . The sailors sang the *Salve* . . . At two hours after midnight the land stood clearly out of the sea . . ."

And thus, simply, Columbus announced the greatest discovery of the ages.

VI

COLUMBUS landed on an island which, in his opinion, was on the outskirts of Cypango (Japan). In reality it was one of the West Indies, just south of Florida. He had been right in his conjecture about the roundness of the earth, but he had underestimated its

size. He thought that the Orient lay just about where America is situated. To his dying day he felt certain that he had reached Asia instead of a new continent.

And in the certainty of his belief, he set about searching for the riches that had been reported to exist so plentifully in Asia. "These islands which I have reached," he wrote to the king and the queen, "contain an infinite number of precious stones and gold incalculable . . . Their Highnesses can see that I will give them as much gold as they may need . . ."

And also, he reminded his sovereigns, he would enrich the Church with "an incalculable wealth" of converted souls. "For the which, all Christendom ought to feel delight and make great feasts and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity."

Columbus was to be disappointed in both of these hopes. It was not until thirty years later that the Spanish conquistadors discovered—and plundered—the gold of Montezuma. As for the conversion of the Indians, they would have nothing of the new faith. For they soon learned to distrust the visitors from over the sea. At first they had looked upon them as strange white gods who brought them beautiful gifts—pitchers and caps and sashes and slippers, and little glass beads that you strung around your neck and that held in them the colors of the rainbow. But before long they noticed that these newcomers were not white gods but white devils. They had come to these shores not to befriend them but to cheat them. ("Our men," wrote Columbus, "are defrauding the natives of their most valuable possessions in exchange for bits of broken pitchers.") And these white devils were kidnaping their strongest and their handsomest people and sending them off to hard labor across the sea. ("His Highnesses," wrote Columbus, "shall have as many Indian slaves as they shall order to be shipped.")

The Indians resented this treatment they received from the "white devils," who carried a crucifix in the one hand and a whip in the other. And when Columbus, after a short visit to Spain,

COLUMBUS

returned to the West Indies, he found not a living trace of the garrison he had left behind him.

He paid, in all, four visits to America; and on each of these occasions he searched diligently for the gold and the jewels which he believed to be scattered throughout the islands. But his searching was all in vain.

King Ferdinand, in the meantime, had become impatient. He had expected gold from Columbus, and he received nothing but words. He determined to show this "wild and worthless dreamer" an example of his royal temper. First of all he deprived Columbus of his promised share in the profits that might accrue from his discovery. "A King's promises," Machiavelli had written, "are made only to be broken." And then Ferdinand sent one of his courtiers, Bobadilla, to the West Indies in order to spy upon the movements of Columbus. "I dare say this Genoese adventurer has found plenty of gold, but is keeping it all for himself."

Bobadilla, after a careful investigation, found Columbus innocent of the charge of dishonesty. But he found him guilty of another charge—stupidity. "This man has been stupid enough to discover a poor instead of a rich country." He therefore arrested Columbus and sent him back a chained prisoner to King Ferdinand.

This was quite in keeping with Spanish justice in the latter part of the fifteenth century. "I have done for my King," wrote Columbus, "more than any other prince has ever had from a subject . . . Now I am in such condition that even the vilest may affront me."

Yet even in his despair, he ends upon a note of hope. "God willing, the day will come when none can hear of my suffering without regret . . . and without some admiration for what I have done."

VII

THE hoped-for day did not come within the lifetime of Columbus. He died in obscure poverty.

The irony of the gods, with their lopsided and incomprehensible scales of justice. The strange and fragmentary gifts that they bestow upon the stepchildren of the earth. Talent without power, power without talent; beauty without goodness, goodness without beauty; success without merit, merit without success. Columbus discovered a continent; an impostor gave it his name. In 1503 an Italian adventurer, Amerigo Vespucci, published an account of a "new world" which he claimed to have discovered in 1497. The whole story was a fabrication. But a young German professor, who was publishing a geography at the time, named the new continent *America*, after the dishonest author of the fictitious discovery.

BENVENUTO CELLINI

Important Dates in Life of Benvenuto Cellini

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1500—Born in Florence. | 1540-45—Worked for King Francis I in Paris. |
| 1515—Apprenticed to a goldsmith. | 1545—Returned to Florence. |
| 1519—Went to Rome. | 1558—Received the tonsure of the first ecclesiastical orders. |
| 1527—Took part in defense of Rome. | 1560—Renounced orders and married. |
| 1537—Arrested on (apparently false) charge of embezzlement. | 1560-70—Wrote Autobiography. |

Benvenuto Cellini

1500-1571



THE NAME *Benvenuto* means *Welcome*. For twenty years his parents had prayed for a manchild; but thus far, heaven had answered their prayers with one daughter. Finally, on All Saints' Day in 1500, the midwife came out of the delivery room with a new child for Giovanni Cellini. "I bring you a fine gift," she said, "a blessing such as you do not expect." Giovanni looked at the infant, raised his eyes to Heaven, and exclaimed: "I thank Thee, my Lord, for this welcome surprise!" And right then and there he decided to name the child *Benvenuto*.

II

BENVENUTO had been slow in coming, but he was very fast in getting ahead. "The child is a hurricane of capability and contentiousness." His father wanted him to be a flute-player, but the boy insisted on becoming a goldsmith. "I hate the tinkle of music, but I love the glitter of precious stones." At fifteen he apprenticed

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

His apprenticeship at Florence, however, was short-lived. At sixteen he got into a scrap—it was always the other fellow, he assures us, who started the fighting—and was banished from Florence. Within a few months he was recalled to his native city, only to leave it again as the result of a quarrel he had with his father. He went to Pisa, secured a job with a goldsmith “who adored me for my honesty and my talent,” and left his “adoring” master for further adventures in Florence. Another quarrel with his father—“he still persisted in making a musician out of me”—and again he ran away from Florence. This time, a roughneck young genius of nineteen, he went to seek new fights and new fortunes in Rome.

For two years he fashioned his trinkets, reveled in his duels and his dueats and his glory, and finally attacked singlehanded an “entire tribeful” of his detractors. “Like a maddened bull I came among them, I threw four or five of them to the ground, and I fell on top of them, plying my dagger now on this one, now on that.” For this escapade he was put under the ban, and for a while the firebrand of his temper burned low.

But the flames of his passion began to burn high. He collected and cast away his mistresses as recklessly as he collected and cast away his money. On one occasion, when the mother of his favorite courtesan took her away from Cellini and left for parts unknown, the distracted young lover traveled all over Italy to find her again. And when, to his delight, he did find her, he abruptly abandoned her because the mother had set too high a price upon her.

And yet, although he had no compunction about *throwing* away his mistresses, woe unto those who dared to *take* them away! One day he surprised his colleague, a goldsmith by the name of Pagolo Miccieri, in the arms of his mistress, Caterina. “When I beheld this stealing of my love,” writes Cellini, “I felt a fever leap upon me.” His first impulse was to kill Miccieri. But then he hit upon a far more subtle revenge. He compelled his

BENVENUTO CELLINI

rival to marry Caterina, and then he in turn stole her love from her husband.

Yet his dallies and his duels were but of secondary importance to Cellini. Always foremost in his mind was the development of his genius. It was his ambition to perfect himself in "every phase of jewel-sculpture," from the carving of a tiny medallion to the modeling of a colossal statue. "In all these different branches I set myself to learn with very great attention." He realized that he had undertaken an almost superhuman task, but he believed that he was endowed with an almost superhuman talent. "No man before me has excelled in all these branches, because no man before me has received from Heaven a temperament of such diversified richness."

He believed so profoundly in his own genius that he inspired everybody else to believe in it. Bishops, cardinals, emperors and popes were ready to pay homage to him. And he, so proud was he of his achievements, was ready to pay homage to none. On one occasion, Pope Clement VII commissioned Cellini to model for him a chalice representing the Nativity of Christ. For this work, His Holiness undertook to pay him in regular installments. But when the installments were slow in reaching him, Cellini was equally slow in completing the work. Finally Pope Clement decided to call him to task. "I command you to attend to my chalice!"

"And I," replied Cellini, "request you to attend to my gold."

Unable to do anything himself with this young "upstart of a goldsmith," Pope Clement ordered his legate, Cardinal Salviati, to apply the necessary spur. "This beast of a Cardinal"—writes Cellini in his *Autobiography*—"sent for me at the end of eight days, telling me to bring along the chalice; to whom I went without it. When I arrived, the Cardinal said to me insolently: 'Where is that hodgepodge of yours? Have you finished it?'"

"To which I replied with equal insolence: 'I shall not finish my hodgepodge until you give me the onions with which to season it.'"

"At these words"—continues Cellini—"the Cardinal flew into a rage, and cried: 'I will send you to the galleys, and then you will have the grace to finish the job!'"

"'My Lord,' I rejoined, 'you cannot send me to the galleys unless I commit a crime. Until then, I am a free man and I refuse to bow to an uncivil tongue . . . A pleasant good day to you, sir!'"

And Cellini went home and sulked "like Achilles in his tent" until both the Cardinal and the Pope yielded to his demands. "They couldn't help it," concludes Cellini in his usual tone of arrogant naïveté. "For they knew that I was the greatest man that ever was born in my profession."

III

ONE DAY, as he was walking through the streets of Rome, Cellini met a group of "ruffians who disliked my work." When they arrived at about "the length of two Ave Marias" from Cellini, they stopped and "laughed with derision" in his direction. This act of disrespect so infuriated Cellini that he drew his dagger and rushed upon them. "As I aimed to strike their leader (Pompeo) in the face, the fear that he experienced made him turn his countenance away"—note how Cellini always puts the blame upon his adversary—"so that I caught him exactly under the ear." The man died of the blow, "a thing I had never intended—why *did* he turn his face away?"

Cellini was lucky enough to escape the consequences of this crime. The new Pope—Clement VII was now dead—granted him a pardon on the ground that the murder was an act of self-defense. "And it was a fortunate thing that they saved me. For I proceeded to astonish the world with the marvels of my creative genius." More adventures, more loves, more crimes. His superabundant energy was forever boiling over into new quarrels, and his exuberant imagination was forever exaggerating small insults into great injuries. Once, as he was traveling toward Florence, he

BENVENUTO CELLINI

stopped at an inn where the landlord insisted upon being paid "before I went to sleep" instead of receiving his pay, "as was customary, in the morning." Fuming with rage, Cellini paid the inn-keeper "according to his evil method" and went to bed. "I had a very fine bed, entirely new, and very clean. For all this, I couldn't fall asleep, meditating all that night how I must act to avenge myself. Once it came into my thoughts to set fire to the house; at another moment, to cut the throats of four fine horses that he had in his stable . . ." Finally, in the morning, he hit upon the following revenge: "I took out of my pocket a small knife that cut like a razor, and with that knife I whittled four of his new beds into splinters." By the time the inn-keeper was up, Cellini was already too far away to be overtaken.

His fiery temper and his consuming energy resulted again and again in a physical breakdown. But out of every illness—once he was taken for dead and prepared for burial—he came out with greater vitality than before. "The reason why I always recovered was that I followed my own prescriptions rather than those of the doctor." Whatever Cellini did was—he was convinced—for Cellini's best.

And Cellini—he was equally convinced—was the greatest of artists and the noblest of men. "In art," he quotes from a sonnet written about himself, "he is superior to all men; in character, equal to all the angels." Whenever he undertook a job, he not only came up to everybody's expectations—he tells us—but he greatly surpassed them. In every new undertaking he tried not only to outdo his rivals, but to outdo himself. "Benvenuto," declares Cellini with the complacency of Little Jack Horner, "is the glory of the world."

Yet, on one occasion, his glory received the tarnish of a prison sentence. He was charged with having stolen a number of precious stones from the Pope's tiara. He defended himself vigorously against this charge and—he declares—completely established his innocence. "Yet so powerful were my enemies that I remained in prison as though I were guilty."

His active body was confined, but not his active brain. He set to work devising a plan of escape; and, having devised it, he at once put it into execution. He secured from one of the jailers a pair of pincers, wrested away the nails which held together the iron bands of his cell-door, slipped out at night through the loosened door, and then let himself down from the tower by a rope made out of a sheet which he had cut into strips. "In my descent from the tower, I had scraped the skin off the palms of my hands, which were bleeding . . ."

This, however, was not the end of his troubles. When he tried to rise, he found that his leg had been broken in the escape. "Yet this did not dismay me . . . Binding the leg together with a strip of the cloth which I had used for my rope, I crawled towards the city gate"—only to find it closed . . . "Nor did even this dismay me . . . Seeing a certain stone exactly beneath the gate, I laid hold of it: and tore it loose . . . And by this means I entered the city of Rome."

Whereupon a pack of dogs "threw themselves upon me"—it is hard to tell where reality leaves off and Cellini's imagination begins—"and bit me severely." He fought the dogs off with his dagger, and dragged himself laboriously to the house of a friend.

But he was discovered and taken back to prison—this time, as he thought, for life.

His sufferings in prison were almost unendurable. "I was carried into a dark chamber . . . where there was much water, full of tarantulas and many noxious worms . . . I remained continuously on a pallet of coarse hemp without being able to move, since I had a broken leg . . . For one hour and a half of the day I had a little reflection of light, which entered that miserable cavern by a very tiny aperture; and, during that short space of time only could I read, and the rest of the day and of the night I remained always in the dark." His nails grew so long that he "couldn't touch himself without wounding himself," and his teeth "died in their sockets," so that their roots lacerated his gums. Again and again he tried to do away with himself; "but

BENVENUTO CELLINI

some heavenly power always held me back." The world, he felt, still needed his genius, which somehow, some time, would be able to reassert itself. With a little charcoal that he had found imbedded in the earthen floor, he drew upon the wall of his cell a picture of Jesus surrounded by His angels. To this picture he prayed daily for his final deliverance.

And deliverance finally came. One day, just as he had concluded his prayer, his guardian angel lifted him up "after the manner of a whirlwind" and—he tells us—carried him to Heaven. Here he spoke "face to face with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Virgin." And they promised him to soften the hearts of his jailers so that they would set him free. "And that very day I was set free."

As a proof of the divine grace that had enveloped him in Heaven, Cellini pointed out to his friends—"and every one of them can see it"—a halo that hovered about his head. "This halo may be observed above my shadow all the morning from sunrise until two hours after sunrise. . . . It may be observed also in the evening at sunset . . ."

Cellini had now arrived at the very apex of self-adoration.

IV

To CELEBRATE his deliverance from prison, Cellini got into another quarrel and committed another murder—a rather strange business for a man with a halo. And then, to escape further trouble, he went to Paris and entered the service of King Francis I. At the king's request, he undertook a group of three silver statues—"a work of genius such as even the ancients had never seen."

The king was delighted with Cellini's art. But Cellini was not at all pleased with the king's avarice. "When we talked about my salary, the prince tried to beat me down as if I were a load of wood." However, they finally compromised upon a payment of 750 gold ducats a year—"the same allowance that King Francis

had given to Leonardo da Vinci. This sum, though far from sufficient, was at least respectable."

There now began a period of comparative quiet for "the greatest man that ever was born"—we are quoting Cellini's own words about himself. Under the cooler rays of the Parisian sun he was able—as a general rule—to restrain his temper and to channel his superabundant energy into creative work. Among the many things that he made for King Francis was a salt-cellar of ivory and gold. Cellini gives us a vivid description of its exquisite design. "This salt-cellar was oval in shape . . . and fashioned into the (figured) likeness of the Sea and Earth, both seated. And they intertwined their legs, just as . . . the Sea runs into the Earth and the Earth juts into the Sea . . . And in the right hand of the Sea I had fixed a trident, and in his left hand I had placed a boat . . . which was to receive the salt. There were beneath this said figure his four animals of the Sea, each of them represented with the head of a ^{Rc} horse and the tail of a fish . . . The water was enameled in ^{ack} the various colors of the waves . . . For the Earth I had fashioned a very beauteous woman—with the Horn of Plenty in one hand, and in the other a small Ionian temple which was to receive the pepper. Beneath this female figure I had placed the handsomest animals that the Earth produces, And the rocks of the Earth I depicted partly in enamel and partly in gold . . . I had then placed this work upon a pedestal of black ebony carved into the four figures of the Night, the Day, the Twilight, and the Dawn . . . Interspersed among these were the figures of the four winds—the East, the North, the South and the West . . . a work to arouse the astonishment and the admiration of all men everywhere . . ."

Eloquent as he was in extolling the virtues of his own work, he was equally eloquent in disparaging the defects of his rivals' works. Asked to explain why he disliked the Hercules of Bandinello, he said: "Because it is bad, from top to toe . . . If you were to shave the hair off the skull, there wouldn't be left enough of a head to house his brain . . . As regards the face, there's no

BENVENUTO CELLINI

telling whether it represents the features of a man or of an ox . . . The shoulders resemble the two pommels of an ass's saddle . . . His breasts and the rest of his muscles are not copied from those of a man, but are drawn from an old sack full of melons . . . And now look at the legs; they seem to have no connection with that ugly body. You can't tell upon which of his legs he is resting his weight . . . The calves have neither muscles nor sinews nor blood . . . And his feet are so utterly devoid of life that one of them seems to be buried in the earth and the other shriveled in a flame . . ."

His caustic tongue finally resulted in a quarrel between Cellini and the king. Disappointed at the royal neglect of an artist "greater even than Michelangelo," Cellini returned to the hot sun and the fiery adventures of his native Florence. Added to his "natural" vices, he was now accused of an "unnatural" vice and was compelled to flee from the city until the storm blew over. And then came a pardon from the duke, and Cellini returned to his aberrations under serene skies again. Serene, but for one dark cloud that tempted him—to quote his picturesque expression—"to throw myself into despair." Among his illegitimate children there was a two-year-old son whom he loved better than his own life. One day he went to visit this child whom he had placed with a wet-nurse. "When I reached him, I found him in good health, and I so unhappy kissed him." But when Cellini rose to depart, the child clung to him with his little hands, and "with a passion of tears and screams" begged his father not to go. "It seemed as if he had a presentiment of some great tragedy." And sure enough, three days after his return to Florence, Cellini heard that the wet-nurse had accidentally smothered his little son. "And this news," writes Cellini, "gave me so great a sorrow as I have never felt a greater."

V

THE FIRES and the desires of his youth had now almost completely subsided. When his enemies insulted him, he no longer

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

rushed upon them with his sword. Instead, he transfixed them with his pen. But his lampoons were no less keen than his sword-thrusts.

And equally keen was the ever-shining instrument of his genius. Like Michelangelo, he had that rare faculty of improving with age. "My last works"—and he spoke the simple truth—"were the best." When he unveiled his statue of *Perseus*, hundreds of sonnets in praise of the work were nailed to the posts of his door. "For, since it was the vacation at the University of Pisa, all those most excellently learned scholars vied with one another upon that subject."

This unveiling of the *Perseus* was the culmination of Cellini's triumph. He was now universally recognized as one of the greatest artists of all time.

And now, having tasted all the exciting pleasures of life, he settled down to the more quieting contentments of old age. He bought a farm, entered the primary grade of the Holy Orders, and—at the age of sixty—married for the first time. He ushered into the world—with or without benefit of clergy—five daughters and three sons, the last of whom was born when Cellini was sixty-nine years old.

The following year the young-old artist laid down the burden of a too impetuous life. And the world was so much the emptier for the passing of one who had proved himself "a master of the greatest as well as of the smallest things."

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Important Dates in Life of Sir Walter Raleigh

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1552—Born. | 1587—Appointed Captain of the Royal Guard. |
| 1568—Entered Oxford (but never graduated). | 1592—Lost Queen Elizabeth's favor. |
| 1569—Volunteered to serve with French Huguenots. | 1595—Explored South America. |
| 1580—Served as captain in British infantry. | 1597—Regained Queen's favor. |
| 1581—Became favorite at British court. | 1600—Appointed governor of Jersey. |
| 1583—Received, from Queen Elizabeth, grant of Durham House. | 1603—Sent by King James to Tower. |
| 1584—Knighted. | 1616—Released.
Made second voyage to South America. |
| 1584-87—Sent expeditions to Virginia. | 1618—October 29, executed. |

Sir Walter Raleigh

1552-1618

HE HATH BEEN a star at which the world hath gazed. But stars . . . must fall when they trouble the sphere wherein they abide." A guiding star he appeared to those who dared to follow—too brilliant for the early dawn that was the age in which his course was set. Eyes that had long looked on darkness were dazzled and afraid. And in their fear, they needs must destroy that which they could not comprehend

Of Walter Raleigh's childhood, there is little known. Born (1552) of seafaring people in the West Country, he seemed from the start to have been compounded of tempest and fire. Early his eyes were drawn toward the sails that slipped silently beyond the horizon, embarked upon the exciting adventure of the unexplored.

An insatiable curiosity for the unknown impelled him to seek in every field where there was knowledge to be gleaned. Yet no dull bookworm he. His quick mind soon absorbed a subject and turned to fresher fields.

At sixteen he entered Oxford where he was "worthily esteemed a proficient in oratory and philosophy." But his attendance was far from being worthy of esteem.

Like a small boat on a large sea, his early years—now in full

view upon a wave's crest, now lost to sight in the trough. Enlisting in the French and Irish wars, he displayed for the first time the quality that was to mark his entire career. In the presence of danger he was without thought of self but full of concern for those under him. See him standing "with a pistol in the one hand and his iron-shod quarter-staff in the other," fending off a small army, whilst his escort passes safely over a river.

Ruthless in the protection of his comrades, he was all-too-lenient in the defense of his own interests. Again and again it was to prove his undoing, this too great generosity toward an enemy. A man too big for his age, he was unable to conceive of souls so small that they wouldn't treat him as he treated them.

Such is the rather hazy picture of Raleigh in his youth. That this picture is not more concrete is due partly to Raleigh's own fault. "Whosoever in writing a modern history shall follow truth too near the heels," he observed, "it may haply strike out his teeth." *Vlwm9* *416*

Yet this much we know from his subsequent life. Fate has prepared him for a stellar role. At twenty-nine, formed as to character and endowed with personal charm, he is led to where the stage is set. He is sent to court bearing dispatches. There, attracting the Queen's notice, he becomes the central figure in a drama that has thrilled and horrified the ages.

II

RALEIGH "requested the Queen's ear; he got it in a trice." Destiny had brought together these two for many purposes. Elizabeth loved a soldier. She was a woman peculiarly sensible to masculine attractions. Wearied by the heavy-handed fawning of her courtiers, she found in Raleigh an intellect equal to her own, a counsel she could respect.

Raleigh, "darling of the English Cleopatra," is a figure to fire the imagination. Adequate to all situations, he rises gallantly to the romantic gestures demanded of him. As when—for example

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

—"spreading his cloak in a plashy place, whereupon the Queen treads gently over," he receives the Royal smile with bended head. And is rewarded by many a cloak in return.

Knowing the Queen's love of public devotion, gaily he fulfills his role. With a diamond he inscribes his admiration on a windowpane where all may see:

"Fain would I rise, yet fear to fall."

And waiting he receives the Queen's reply, transferred through the selfsame medium:

"If thy heart fails thee, climb not at all."

He had passed the first test; Elizabeth was satisfied. And now began an association that was to change the course of history. For Raleigh was the first Englishman to dream of Empire—the first colonizer in a nation that was to colonize one-third of the world. The Queen was "much taken with his elocution," and night and day she listened to his plans. Elizabeth possessed an intellect that could follow his fancy far beyond the boundaries of her little island. Understandable, then, that she wished him always by her side. Having appointed him to a post in Ireland, she changed her mind and ordered him to stay at court, lest in his travels he "get knockt on the head."

Steadily he rises in the Queen's esteem. Grant follows grant, until Raleigh is a man of wealth. But prosperity is the father of envy. With the growth of his prestige, there is an equal growth of his unpopularity. He is too impatient to court the opinion of the rabble—"the dogs that bark at those they know not." At every turn his swift searching stride causes him to tread on sensitive toes. And when they retaliate, there is venom in their kick.

Yet thus far they are unable to do him harm. The arc of his fortune is on the upward swing. Elizabeth is generous with her favorite. He is Lord Warden of the Tanneries. He is knighted. He is Captain of the Queen's Guard. Though generally "the best

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

hated man in the world," in his own province he is adored. There he has established a miners' council. Slipping away from the satins and the perfumes of the court, he meets his own people. There, upon a high tower, mist enshrouded, he confers with the miners—speaking that soft West Country hurr that Elizabeth finds so enchanting.

III

RALEIGH scorned the rabble in the mass, yet loved the individual common man. Throughout his life he tried to bring decency and justice into a world whose only justice was might and whose only decency was victory.

None better than Raleigh knew the wanton cruelty inflicted upon the Irish, those stubborn people who loved their land better than their life. It was he who first propounded self-rule for them. Reminding Elizabeth of their courage, he suggested that she gain the confidence of their chieftains who in turn would gain the confidence of their people. Thus they might establish a protectorate, and end the wholesale slaughter of a nation in religion's name.

Elizabeth saw the wisdom of his reasoning, and in all his plans concurred. But the Irish leaders were not ready for this civilizing influence. At such distance, royal commands could be disobeyed, and words made to appear other than what they meant. There was only one Raleigh, and he could not be everywhere.

Not when his presence is demanded at court, and his heart is centered upon his first love—the American colonies. Time and again he stands at the water's edge and gazes with a sad exaltation upon the men "going down to the sea in ships." His spirit sails to Virginia, while his person remains at the command of the Queen. Elizabeth has promised to defray all his expenses if only he will stay near her and let others go to Virginia in his place.

More grants, more lands. On his Irish estates Raleigh has cultivated the lowly potato, has popularized the smoking of the

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

"vile-weed"—tobacco. These, with the trees and the shrubs from the colony which he has transplanted onto English soil are the only tangible proofs of his dream. The first Virginia colony had prospered for a while and then ended in the desertion of all the settlers. Of the second colony, all the members had been massacred. He sends out a third colony. Virginia has become a sieve into which he pours his fortune. An endless stream of more men, more ships, more supplies. Leashed like a restless mastiff at the court, he must watch the bungling of those permitted to go, must fret at those who antagonize the natives in defiance of his repeated counsel to friendliness and peace.

Eventually he turns the whole project over to the Virginia Company. For now there are other matters that occupy the attention of Raleigh, of all England. The long dreaded Spanish Armada is on the way. Galvanized into action, Raleigh throws himself into the planning of fortifications and of coastal defenses. But when the actual fighting commences, Raleigh is left without a command. The Queen's favorite must not risk his neck. Chafing at the inactivity, he must remain at court—chained to a petticoat.

And then, release at last. Elizabeth sends him to order an attack. Gallantly the little fleet, outmanned twenty to one, sets forth. The elements have espoused the English cause. A strong tempest on the day of the battle. With wind and wave fighting on their side, they drive off the Spanish Armada. Raleigh cries for pursuit and complete annihilation. But England is satisfied. She accepts her victory with modest gratitude. "God blew with his winds, and the enemy was scattered."

IV

RALEIGH is in danger of being superseded. Another man has caught the Queen's roving eye. Young Essex. A strange rivalry has arisen between these two men. The nineteen-year-old Essex is jealous of the Queen's high regard for the mature Raleigh. He tries to poison the Queen's ear against him. And Raleigh as Com-

tain of the Queen's Guard, is compelled to listen to the aspersions cast upon him by this saucy little schoolboy. Elizabeth enjoys the rivalry. Yet for all of Essex's youthful charms, Raleigh is the man whose wisdom she esteems. Staunchedly she defends him. Essex complains against her partiality. "She came to speak of that knave Raleigh, and it seemed she could not well endure anything to be spoken against him."

Essex is losing ground. His attempts to dislodge his rival have served only to strengthen Raleigh's position. The mysterious winding of the thread of Destiny. What might have seemed a misfortune, proved actually to be Raleigh's good luck. England had decided on reprisals against Spain. Raleigh received permission to join the crusade while Essex was ordered to remain behind in silken dalliance. But Essex was young and impetuous. Defying the Queen, he joined the fleet. And the strange rivalry continued on the high seas. With a stubborn perversity, Essex overruled every one of Raleigh's plans, and the man of judgment must needs yield to Essex's greater rank.

Strangely enough—again that mysterious winding of Destiny's thread—Raleigh had conceived a genuine fondness for the headstrong youth. In dispatches to the Queen, he made excuses for his rival's mistakes even while Essex was peevishly endeavoring to undermine him. Score another point for Raleigh. From Elizabeth he receives a gold chain—token of her trust in him, the snub directed to Essex.

But Raleigh's position is far from secure. At home the jackals are making holiday. Interpreting his absence as disfavor on the part of the Queen, they greedily set about usurping his properties and rights. In Ireland, too, the natives confiscate his lands—those bogs which he has reclaimed through his system of drainage and converted into rich soil for their advantage.

And then, another twist of Destiny's thread, and Raleigh's fortune is again on the rise. Essex has committed the unforgivable sin. He has taken himself a bride. Banishing Essex, Elizabeth reinstates Raleigh and showers gifts upon him. She presents him

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

with Sherborne—a manor house of breath-taking beauty but of an accursed history. It is whispered that all who come into possession of Sherborne are destined to die on the scaffold.

In the meantime, Raleigh's wealth has melted away. Gone in reckless gifts to his friends. "When will you cease to be a pauper?" the Queen asks him.

"When your Majesty ceases to be a benefactor," Raleigh replies.

For the moment he basks in the sun of the Queen's favor. But this moment is of brief duration. There are whispered rumors, they grow louder, they reach the Queen. Raleigh has seduced Elizabeth Throckmorton. He "hath been too inward with one of her Majesty's maids. The explorer hath discovered not a new continent, but a new incontinent." The Queen's wrath is dreadful to behold. Raleigh tries to escape, but he is overtaken and with his paramour sent to the Tower. Eventually, a secret marriage comes to light. Lady Raleigh is banished to Sherborne, there to begin her married life alone. But Raleigh remains a prisoner. His hot blood has spurned Elizabeth Tudor for Elizabeth Throckmorton. Let him cool it off amidst the damp stones of the Tower.

V

NOMINALLY a prisoner, Raleigh is—within limitations—at liberty under guard. Yet his complete freedom is a hope that Elizabeth stubbornly is determined to postpone. And then once again Destiny takes a hand. A number of heavily freighted Portuguese vessels, driven by the English, have run aground. The countryside in fevered activity is looting and carrying away the treasure. The English sailors, shocked at Raleigh's imprisonment, demand his presence to restore order. Under guard, he is sent to their aid. His mission having been accomplished, Raleigh is denied his share of the prize. His freedom, the Queen contends, is more than ample payment for his service. With this he must be content, and with "banishment from the Royal Presence."

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

Contentment for the first time. As Raleigh the courtier disappears, Raleigh the man emerges. His rich personality has blossomed into full flower. With his devoted wife—"Dear Bess"—he improves Sherborne, experimenting with the healing qualities of many herbs. Marriage has sounded a deep chord in his nature. He has become a man of rich emotions and large thoughts. Poet himself, he is the friend of poets. He is preoccupied with the mystery of death, and with the transient futility of all earthly progress. "The long day of mankind draweth fast toward an evening, and the world's time and tragedy are nearly at an end."

He has begun to question the narrow sectarian system of his age. Deeply religious, he tries to find a universal truth, a common basis for all religion. The Puritans are making heard their small voice, crying in the wilderness of intolerance. Raleigh enlists in defense of their right to worship as they will. But he himself is in disgrace and powerless to lend them substantial aid.

Restless again. No extended interludes of pastoral contentment for Raleigh. That dreaming look has once more overspread his countenance. Those brooding eyes are now focused upon Guiana. It is believed that the deposed Incas have formed a new civilization of fabulous wealth. "Through the veins of Guiana flows a stream of gold."

Elizabeth grants him a patent to "discover and subdue heathen lands." In 1595 he sets sail for Guiana, whose chieftains joyously acclaim their liberator from across the sea. With new hope they join forces against the Spanish whose cruelties have depopulated their towns and confiscated their treasures. Raleigh returns to England, with a promise to send ships and supplies to Guiana. A great vision has fired his mind—the vision of a new world "where men shall live in fruitful amity." Justice and peace shall reign in this new world under the protection of the old.

In England once again, he can find no audience for his brave dream. The Queen is "old and full of sleep." The court and council have no time for this "impractical dreamer with his grandiose schemes." The Elizabethan Age is fast drawing to a close.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

Dark shadows hover in the offing—darkest of all, the Scotch James, who seems the likeliest successor to the English throne. Already the opportunists are courting that weak and depraved spirit. False lips are pouring poison into that willing ear. "Raleigh is the man that you must fear and hate." Raleigh, sturdy oak with head cloud-wreathed in thoughts of bright tomorrows, is all unaware of the sly foxes gnawing at his roots.

VI

THERE ARE sad days ahead for England. Raleigh views with misgiving a dismal future in which James, with Robert Cecil and his ilk, will guide the destinies of their country. Elizabeth is feeble; the reins rest loosely in her palsied hands. But Raleigh still labors faithfully in her behalf. At last he is permitted to track the Spaniard to his lair.

With a small fleet, he surprises the unsuspecting enemy. His courage, like a giant magnet, draws the entire contingent behind him to a superhuman effort. The city of Cadiz is overwhelmed and sacked. The Spanish domination is at an end. England is now supreme upon the waves.

But the Queen is not as jubilant as once she might have been. Sick and confined to the Palace, she is tired of her public affairs and saddened by the puerile blusterings of Essex.

Raleigh, too, is sad at the sight of a courageous life wasted. He attempts to reason with him. But a dread disease is consuming Essex, is gnawing at his brain. His wild rantings culminate in an insurrection against Elizabeth. Captured, he remains vindictive to the end, striving to implicate Raleigh in a treason plot. With great reluctance the Queen signs the young insurgent's death warrant. The execution makes heartsick both Elizabeth and Raleigh. With very real affection they had watched this wayward child, hoping that eventually he might come into the fold. And their hope was dead.

Raleigh's health is failing. One by one his contemporaries are

disappearing from the scene. The gallant days of adventure in Merrie England are over. Ponderous, petty men are setting the stage for the advent of King James.

The Queen is dead. Long live the King! Elizabeth has joined her Maker (March, 1603) and James has ascended the throne. Raleigh remains alone. Last of the Elizabethans, first of the Moderns, he hovers suspended between two worlds. And England lies submerged in the darkness into which her lecherous king has plunged her. The arts and the sciences—the glory of Elizabeth's reign—are discouraged. Superstition and witchcraft have spread over the land. There is no seat for Raleigh at this "banquet of backwardness." Slowly James and his little men weave the net in which they intend to stifle Sir Walter's life.

One by one his grants, lands, privileges, titles are stripped from him. Only Sherborne remains; and on this, too, James has fixed his greedy gaze. Now they pull the drawstring, and the net closes. Raleigh is arrested, charged with treason. He is granted a "trial," the injustice of which has rarely been equaled. Not a single witness could be found to testify against Raleigh. The only evidence as to his guilt was a deposition wrung from a coward whom they dared not summon into court. From a Tower cell, this pusillanimous Cobham every morning penned notes implicating Raleigh, and every afternoon wrote letters vindicating him. Finally, after several days of this legalistic farce, the judges found Raleigh guilty—at the King's command. With head held high, he received the sentence: "To be banged by the neck, cut down living, and his heart removed, before the populace."

VII

RALEIGH'S FINAL SPEECH before the judges. A plea not for mercy, not for justice, but that he may die an honorable death instead of being barbarously mangled in accordance with their verdict. The judges, aghast at what they have been compelled to do, give their consent—some, with tear-dimmed eyes.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

A stunned silence descends upon the court as Raleigh is led away. Cecil, as he accompanies him to the Tower, weeps. "Raleigh," he reports, "conducted himself with admirable erection, yet in such sort as a condemned man should."

All England was shocked at the farcical trial. So transparent had been the sham, so obvious Raleigh's innocence, that nobody had anticipated the outcome. The very judges who had tried him were appalled at their own deed. "We are sending an innocent man to his death."

As the Tower door clangs shut, he leaves behind an affectionate people. Raleigh pampered was despised. But Raleigh condemned is the idol of England. Everybody clamors for his release. Even Queen Anne has added her voice to the general outcry. But the cards are stacked against him. James is determined to get him out of the way. His mind has been too completely poisoned by the enemies of Raleigh. The condemned man awaits his end with calm resignation. His thoughts are for others. On the eve of execution he writes to his Dear Bess. "I beseech you for the love you bare me living, that you do not hide yourself many days . . . Your mourning cannot avail me that am but dust."

The day is come. Sadistic James has prepared an extra treat for the man he hates. The scaffold is set up beneath Raleigh's window, and he is the last to be executed. He is to watch the others die, in order that his agony may be "thus duly prolonged."

- And now we see enacted a comedy so fraught with vicious cunning that only a warped mentality could have conceived it. Each of the condemned men is led onto the scaffold, then granted a reprieve. The crowd mutters. The last man has been led away. But what of Raleigh? He has witnessed the release of his fellow prisoners, but what is to be his own fate? As long as he dares, James withholds the climax—savoring to the full his grim jest. But the crowd grows restive, the mutterings become louder. Now, at last, James announces the finale. Raleigh's sentence is commuted to life imprisonment. A glorious joke! Living death for the man who loves life so well.

VIII

A POIGNANT DRAMA—the story of Raleigh's imprisonment in the Tower. His cell had become a place of pilgrimage. A new savior of his people. While the magic-makers were concocting poisonous love philters and charms, Raleigh had learned to brew herbs into healing medicines. To him came the sickly Queen Anne, now his staunch friend. He cured her of her illness with his Oil of Balsam. Ceaselessly she extolled its virtues, and ceaselessly she sued for Raleigh's pardon.

A strange man, Raleigh—officially dead, who yet refused to die. Innumerable legends sprang up about him. The world's great journeyed to his side. The warden, jealous of his prisoner, attempted through restrictions to curb his growing popularity. "Sir Walter hath converted a little hen-house in the garden into a still, where he doth spend his time all the day in his distillations . . . If a brick wall were built, it would be more safe and convenient." The wall was built, and Raleigh even more closely confined.

And now Raleigh is very ill. The prison dampness and the river mists are taking their toll. His left side is paralyzed, speech is difficult. It is necessary to remove him from the riverside. Once again he has his little hen-house.

But not his peace. With petty persecutions the warden continues to plague him. Raleigh endeavors to rise above these vexations. He is happy in a new friend. Prince Henry, a youngster with a prodigious intellect, has found his way into the Tower. With Raleigh he discusses the affairs of state. And for his guidance Raleigh writes *A History of the Modern World*. The young Prince has exacted from James the promise that at Christmas Raleigh will be released. But shortly before Christmas Prince Henry dies. The rumor of poison flies from tongue to tongue. And Raleigh remains in the Tower . . .

Always he protests his innocence, proclaims his loyalty to the crown. At last James attends to his pleas. The prison doors swing

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

open (1616) and Raleigh steps forth. But not into freedom. No pardon accompanies the release. King James has other plans for Raleigh.

All unsuspecting, Raleigh accepts the terms proposed. He is to head an expedition to Guiana, there to locate and to work the gold mine discovered on the previous voyage. For this venture he is made Admiral. All expenses are to be met from his own purse, but the crown is to receive the lion's share of the profits. A royal bargain, this. James, cringing beneath the threats of the Spanish ambassador, has promised Raleigh's head to Spain.

In Guiana, Raleigh knows a few short weeks of happiness. He roams over the countryside collecting herbs for medicinal purposes. But one day a small company of his men sails up the Orinoco, seeking the mine. Met with fire from a Spanish town, they return the fire. These unfortunate shots reach round the world. Spain proclaims that England has violated her peace pact, and that Raleigh is the culprit. Word reaches Guiana that James has denounced him as a traitor, has sworn that he must hang. Down tumbles Raleigh's house of gilded cards, as the truth flashes upon his stunned mind. He is the victim of a plot. Actually, he had sailed from England with a noose already draped about his neck.

IX

RALEIGH, left to rot in prison, had stirred the world. And now, tossed to the Spaniards, once more he refused to stay put. He rushed back to England, determined to clear his name.

King James is in a fury. Can't a monarch rid himself of this troublesome visionary, whose courage verges on the foolhardy? Yes, there still remains the execution block. Again the Tower receives its guest. And James demands the death sentence on any charge that can be trumped up.

The rotten timber of James's reign is crumbling. Trembling behind his barricade of evil deeds, he wields now but little power.

Valiantly Raleigh defends himself, refuting all charges brought against him. The judges are unable to convict him.

But James must have his life. That old trick again. The unproved and forgotten treason charge is dusted off and hung once more upon Raleigh. Again he hears his death sentence pronounced. Again he prepares himself for the end.

X

AWARE of Raleigh's widespread popularity and of his own despised position, James hastens the execution.

To the Tower come friends to offer consolation. They find an exalted Raleigh, who proceeds to console *them*. Already he has cast off his earthly bonds. He walks in realms that transcend the flesh and all things temporal: "The world's but a larger prison out of which some are daily selected for execution," he writes.

Lord Mayor's Day. A vast crowd is gathered around the scaffold. They pity and admire as Raleigh is led forth. Too weak to walk alone, he is supported on each side. Tall and erect, with white head raised high, he has a jest or a word of encouragement for every one of them. Draining the proffered cup of sack, he observes, "'Tis a good drink if a man might but tarry by it." His warm smile moves even his enemies to tears.

From the scaffold he begs indulgence. Should he tremble, let it not be mistaken for cowardice. "'Tis but that the hour of his ague is upon him."

Many feared that Raleigh might sway the crowd against the King. But even at this hour, he is without malice. "What have I to do with kings, who am about to go before the King of Kings!"

The executioner breaks down, and weeps. Kneeling beside him, Raleigh places his palms upon the man's shoulders and exhorts him to do his appointed task well. "When I hold forth my hands," he tells him, "strike." Raleigh rests his head upon the block and holds out his hands. Still the axe is stayed. "Strike, man, strike!" he cries. Two swift strokes, and all is over. An awed

SIR WALTER RALEIGH

hush descends upon the spectators. They draw away from one another. A man's voice cries, "There was never such another head to be cut off!"

"Aye," cries an answering voice, "and will there ever be such another hand to help a poor soul?"

SHAKESPEARE

Important Dates in Life of Shakespeare

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1564—Born at Stratford-on-Avon. | plays, at the rate of two a year. |
| 1582—Married Ann Hathaway. | 1597—Bought a house at Stratford. |
| 1584—Compelled to leave Stratford for poaching. | 1602—Bought a large estate at Stratford. |
| 1592—Attained success as actor and playwright. | 1609—Published collection of his sonnets. |
| 1593—Published <i>Venus and Adonis</i> . | 1610—Retired to Stratford. |
| 1594-1610—Acted and wrote | 1616—March 25, wrote his will. April 22 died. |

William Shakespeare

1564—1616



OF ALL the mysteries in the world, the genius of Shakespeare is the most difficult to explain. His parents were rather less than ordinary. His father, a glover and wool-stapler, was not able even to sign his name. Shakespeare came of an obscure line, blazed across the skies, and then left an equally obscure line after him. Of his three daughters, two were of average intelligence and the third was downright stupid.

Much ink has been spilled in the battle of scholars who have tried to prove that the plays of Shakespeare were written by a man with another name. What a useless thing to waste our time in such empty pedantries! The work that goes under the name of Shakespeare seems as infinitely beyond the ability of a professor as it is above the capacity of a butcher. Whatever may have been the training or the social standing of the author, it is amazing that anyone bearing a mere human name should have produced a rose of such divine sweetness.

Shakespeare was a freak of nature—a demigod born out of the race of men. No critic as yet, not even Carlyle or Emerson or Brandes or Kittredge or Taine, has been able to probe to the depths of Shakespeare's mind. And the chances are that no critic

ever will. To understand Shakespeare is to understand the complex mystery of creation. For his plays are a reproduction, in miniature, of the whole stupendous drama of life.

Shakespeare was a man gifted with the thoughts and the language of a god. Yet, externally, his life was anything but godlike. The career of this greatest of poets was quite unpoetical. At fourteen he was apprenticed to a butcher. At seventeen he was looked upon as one of the most reckless tipplers and wildest roisterers in the town of Stratford. At eighteen he seduced—or perhaps was seduced by—Ann Hathaway, a woman of twenty-six. He married her in the nick of time, as she was about to become a mother. Shortly after his marriage to her, he fled from Stratford in order to avoid arrest for deer-stealing. Coming up to London, he drifted into the theatrical channels and started out as a low comedian—one of “His Majesty’s poor players.” For the next seventeen years he devoted himself to the writing of sublime dramas and to the acting of motley parts in them. He was an indifferent actor; and as for his plays, he never thought enough of them to get them published during his lifetime.

He made money in his profession, lent out some of it on interest, invested the profits in real estate, knew how to drive a hard bargain, had his debtors imprisoned when they were delinquent in their payments, visited his family once a year, and finally bought an estate in Stratford and settled down to a life of commonplace respectability as a gentleman farmer.

His conduct during his stage career, however, was anything but respectable. On one occasion he drank himself into such a stupor that he was found the next morning under a tree by the roadside. He had his share of unsuccessful love affairs. “When my love swears that she is made of truth,” he complains (Sonnet 138), “I do believe her, though I know she lies.” Apparently he was not much of a ladies’ man. The gentlewomen of London preferred the young lords, with their yellow curls and courtly manners, to the somewhat uncouth country bumpkin who wrote poetry and played the clown. Yet within his own little circle of

SHAKESPEARE

actors and playwrights he was able now and then to outwit his rivals. An anecdote, written in 1602 on the authority of Tooley, relates how "his comrade Burbadge, who played Richard III, having a rendezvous with the wife of a citizen, Shakespeare went before, was well received, and was pleasantly occupied when Burbadge arrived, to whom he sent the message that William the Conqueror came before Richard III."

His family life seems to have been rather stormy. Whatever his success with other people's wives, he enjoyed very little success with his own. To Ann Hathaway, he was anything but William the Conqueror. She nagged him to the very end of his life, and he retaliated by leaving her in his will his "second-best" bed—nothing more.

This, in brief, is the story of Shakespeare's life. But it gives us not the slightest insight into the story of Shakespeare's mind. As a man he was, like most of us, just a little higher than Caliban—one of the earthiest of his creations. But as a teacher of mankind, he seems to belong to another planet, born as if by accident into this puny-minded race of ours.

The foremost intellects in the world have tried to grapple with the intellect of Shakespeare and to reduce his ideas to a logical sequence. But in vain. The critics have made him out to be, in turn, a patriot and a pacifist, a Catholic and an infidel, a sermonizer and a cynic, a humanitarian and a misanthrope, a democratic utopian and a royalist snob. He was none of these; or rather—amazing paradox!—all of these in one. His genius transcended the ideas and the beliefs of any one man, or of any group of men. He entered with an equal degree of sympathy and affection into the mind of every character that he created. Caliban was as intimate a part of Shakespeare as Prospero. The mind of Shakespeare was co-extensive with the mind of the human race.

We shall make no effort to analyze Shakespeare or to delve extensively into the "antres vast and magical groves" of his unfathomable genius. It would be useless to try it. For greater minds have made the attempt and failed. The art of literary criticism

has not as yet invented the yardstick that can gauge the dimensions of Shakespeare's intellect. All we shall try to do here is to explore a little way into one of the many corners of Shakespeare's mind—to dip up, as it were, a mere thimbleful of wisdom out of the inexhaustible ocean of his genius.

With this object in view, let us glance at three of his plays which represent him in three of his distinct attitudes toward life—first as a satirist, then as a man of the world, and finally as a philosopher. These three plays are—*Timon of Athens*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.

II

IN *Timon of Athens* Shakespeare cries out against the injustice of the world with the bitterness of an Isaiah. In his other plays he simply mirrors life, but he rarely moralizes about it. When, occasionally, he does stop in his dramatic action to offer a hasty comment on life, he dismisses it, like some superior visitor from another planet, as an insubstantial and worthless dream—"a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." But in *Timon of Athens* his contempt flares up into indignation. Life here is a tale told, not by an idiot, but by a crafty devil. And far from signifying nothing, it signifies treachery, meanness, hatred, hypocrisy and fraud. Timon was a wealthy citizen of Athens who generously gave all his money away to his friends. When they were troubled by their creditors, he paid their debts. When they were married, he gave them a dowry and set them up in their new life. When he invited them to a banquet, he sent them home with presents of money and of precious stones. His steward, Flavius, warned him time and again that his generosity would bring about his ruin. But Timon, overestimating both the extent of his resources and the gratitude of his friends, paid no attention to Flavius. He kept spending all his money on other people until he had nothing left for himself.

When his own creditors began to bother him, he felt certain

SHAKESPEARE

that his friends, to whom he had given away everything, would come to his rescue. But one by one they refused to help him, each of them offering a different excuse for his refusal.

Whereupon Timon invited them once more to a banquet—and this time he served them nothing but dishes of warm water. Then, before the "affable wolves"—miscalled in the past his friends—were able to recover from their surprise, he dashed the water in their faces and ended by throwing the dishes at them and driving them out of the house.

And thus, having learned the bitter lesson that unselfishness is dangerous in a selfish world, Timon left the city of Athens and went to live in a cave in the woods. Here he found "the unkindest beast more kinder than mankind." While digging in front of his cave for roots to eat, he discovered hidden gold—the "yellow slave and tyrant" of the human race. But its glitter had lost its power. It aroused now within him nothing but contempt. He threw it back into the earth and kept only a few pieces to be used as stones against unwelcome strangers.

When the Athenians learn of this discovery, they come one by one to his cave. Poets, painters, warriors, prostitutes, statesmen, beggarmen, thieves—all of them are eager once more to become the friends of Timon. To each of them in turn he gives a handful of gold, and then like a scornful god he sends them scurrying back to hoard it or spend it in the pigsty of their city. "Go," he cries to several of the thieves as he hands them the gold. "Rob one another. There's more gold. Cut throats. All that you meet are thieves. To Athens go, break open shops; nothing can you steal but thieves do lose it."

All the world, to Timon, is a den of thieves. That is, all the world with the exception of one man. When Timon's old steward, Flavius, arrives to commiserate with his master in the hour of bitterness, Timon feels persuaded that there is, after all, some decency left in the world. "I do proclaim one honest man—mistake me not—but one; no more, I pray—and he's a steward." But he warns Flavius against his own goodness. "Methinks thou

art more honest now than wise; for, by oppressing and betraying me, thou mightst have sooner got another service. For many so arrive at second masters upon their first lord's neck."

Shakespeare has been accused of despising the so-called lower classes. His critics tell us that he never showed any sympathy for them, that he always spoke of them with an aristocratic sneer, and that he looked upon them as mere "sticks and stones and worse than senseless things." Such critics do not understand the universality of Shakespeare's genius. The only lovable character in the entire human race, as represented in *Timon of Athens*, is a Roman slave. There are more sympathies in the mind of Shakespeare than are dreamt of in the philosophy of his critics.

Shakespeare was perhaps the only man in the world who could see life from every angle. He could be, on occasion, as revolutionary as Shelley, as bitter as Heine, as pessimistic as Euripides, as cynical as Byron, as disillusioned as Swinburne, as philosophical as Goethe, and as hopefully resigned as Tennyson. He was a poet who consecutively looked upon life through spectacles of different colors. In *Timon of Athens* he sees life through the dark glass of despair. Nothing in the world seems worthwhile. The erstwhile friend of Timon, Alcibiades, has tried to help his native city of Athens in a crisis. His city repays him with exile for his trouble. He raises an army and marches against the city in retaliation for his unjust banishment. The senators, alarmed over the approaching danger, visit Timon in his cavern and implore him to return to Athens in the hour of their need. But Timon pays no attention to their entreaties. He invokes upon them all the noxious pestilences he can think of. And then, as if on second thought, he informs them that there is something he *will* do for them to save them from death at the hands of Alcibiades:

I have a tree, which grows here in my close,
That mine own use invites me to cut down,
And shortly must I fell it; tell my friends,
Tell Athens, in the sequence of degree

SHAKESPEARE

From high to low throughout, that whoso please
To stop affliction, let him take his haste,
Come hither ere my tree have felt the axe,
And hang himself.

And then, having sent the final shaft of venomous cynicism after his retreating countrymen, Timon digs his grave on the "verge of the salt flood" and puts an end to the evil nightmare of his life. Better to feast the grateful worms underneath, than the two-legged beasts who grovel thanklessly above.

Timon is not the only cynic in the play. The churlish philosopher, Apemantus, is also contemptuous of the stupidity of mankind. But there is a vast difference between the mournful bitterness of Timon and the sarcastic vulgarity of Apemantus. Timon kills himself because he cannot endure the spectacle of man's inhumanity to man. Apemantus, on the other hand, derives the keenest joy out of the selfsame spectacle. Timon would like to destroy the world and to build in its place a world of true friends. But Apemantus would rather find fault with the world than improve it. When one of the noblemen of Athens asks him what time it is, he replies, "Time to be honest." Yet if he ever found himself in an honest world, he would set about immediately to corrupt it, in order that he might be able once more to snarl about its dishonesty. The ingratitude of friends is to Timon no less than a mortal blow. To Apemantus, it is merely an occasion for laughter. It required the most subtle shading of character to draw both Timon and Apemantus in the same play. Yet each without the other would be incomplete. The two men together are the complete answer of Shakespeare, the satirist, to the injustice of the world.

III

IN *Hamlet*, we get the answer of Shakespeare, the man of the world, to the selfsame problem. Confronted with the baseness of humanity, Timon kills himself and Apemantus is merely amused.

But Hamlet, less sensitive than Timon but more noble than Apemantus, tries to meet injustice with punishment and murder with revenge. He believes in the Old Testament doctrine of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. His reaction toward evil is the reaction of the average man. He does not run away from it like Timon, or mock at it like Apemantus. Instead, he broods over it and philosophizes about the meaning of it all; and finally, when his courage and his frenzy have been nursed to the highest pitch, he strikes—not against the evil deed but against the evil doer. And in so striking, he destroys himself as well as the object of his wrath.

Revenge, to Hamlet, was a noble mission. Nothing else, not even his love for Ophelia, must stand in the way. The world of *Hamlet*, in spite of its beautiful maxims and philosophical meditations, is a world of barbarians in which the highest ethical principle is the spirit of vengeance. Strip it of its poetry, and *Hamlet* is an ugly play. A young prince of fairly average intelligence loses his reason through his belief in spirits. Thinking that his father's ghost has urged him to avenge his murder, he goes crazy, reviles his mother, spurns and drives to suicide the girl he is about to marry, kills her father and her brother, and then brings about his mother's death and his own—all because he has promised a ghost that he will punish the king for having committed a murder. It is a rather high and stupid price to pay for a single act of vengeance. This play would indeed seem to be, as Voltaire called it, "the work of a drunken savage." The whole drama of our human existence, for that matter, often appears like the work of a drunken savage. But that is because we regard life, as some of the critics regard Shakespeare, from too narrow a point of view. *Hamlet* represents but a single aspect of Shakespeare's genius, just as vengeance represents but a single aspect of human life. Shakespeare, the magician who could imitate Nature so perfectly, knew better than to let Hamlet stand for his entire philosophy. He had other, and higher, ideas in his dramatic bag of tricks. Nature could produce a Confucius as well as an Orestes, and

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare was able to create a Prospero as well as a Hamlet. In their final analysis, both Nature and Shakespeare have something finer to show to the world than the spirit of mere revenge. Just what this "something finer" is, we shall see in *The Tempest*.

IV

IN *Timon of Athens*, Shakespeare repays injustice with bitterness; in *Hamlet*, with revenge; in *The Tempest*, with forgiveness. Like Timon and Hamlet, Prospero has been tried by suffering. But his sadness makes him all the more compassionate even toward those who have brought the suffering upon him. He does not storm against the world, he does not even laugh at its foolishness, but he smiles with the indulgence of a man who looks upon the follies of children. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has risen above the spirit of satire. He has entered into the world of true philosophy. In many of his other dramas he makes merry, like a heartless god, over the pettiness of humanity. He loves to drag the king down from the throne and to point out to him how with all his pomp he will some day be eaten by a worm, which in turn will be swallowed by a fish, which then in its turn will go into the guts of a beggar. But in *The Tempest*, even when he scolds, he scolds in a gentle voice. The tone of bitter scorn which he often employed in his earlier dramas has been transformed, in this play, into a tender note of pity.

And now—the story of *The Tempest*.

Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, lives with his daughter, Miranda, upon an enchanted island. Twelve years before his brother Antonio, with the aid of Alonso, King of Naples, had treacherously driven him out of Milan and set him afloat, with his three-year-old daughter, in a leaky ship upon the open sea. Having fortunately drifted to this enchanted island, Prospero has spent his time in the education of his daughter and in the study of magic. He has enlisted in his service the faithful spirit, Ariel, and the treacherous savage, Caliban.

One day a ship passes by the island. There is a wedding party on board, returning from Tunis to Italy. Among others in this wedding party are King Alonso and Antonio, who have brought about the banishment of Prospero; and with them are the King's brother, Sebastian, and the King's son, Ferdinand.

Prospero, by means of his magic art, unleashes a tempest over the ocean and drives the vessel upon the enchanted island. He orders Ariel to rescue all the passengers, but to scatter them, in various groups, over the seashore. Ferdinand, thus separated from his father and believing him lost, wanders as it seems to him aimlessly over the island. In reality, however, he is being guided by Prospero's magic to the old enchanter's cell. Here the prince and Miranda, seeing each other for the first time, transact a mutual exchange of hearts even before they have had the opportunity to exchange a single word.

Meanwhile, in one part of the island, Sebastian and Antonio are plotting the murder of the King; and in another part, Caliban and a couple of drunken sailors from the shipwrecked crew are plotting to murder Prospero. Unaware of the fact that this island is enchanted, the newcomers are already trying to establish upon it the immoralities and the stupidities of the world from which they have come. But Prospero, all-knowing and all-powerful, frustrates their savage plans.

At first he is inclined to punish the King and his company for the injuries that they have inflicted upon him. But Ariel, with his more than human wisdom, converts him to a saner point of view. "The King, his brother, and yours," Ariel points out to him, "are all distracted, and . . . brimful of sorrow and dismay . . . Your (magic) charm so strongly works 'em, that if you now beheld them, your affections would become tender."

Prospero: Dost thou think so, spirit?

Ariel: Mine would, sir, were I human.

Prospero: Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions? and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,

SHAKESPEARE

Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
 Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
 Yet, with my nobler reason, 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part . . . Go, release them, Ariel . . .

Compare the words that Timon spoke to the senators with these words that Prospero speaks to Ariel, and you have the difference between the reaction of the man and that of the superman toward the injustice of the world.

For Prospero is a superman—the most sublime type of human character that either Shakespeare or Nature has been able to create. He is the Confucius of the Shakespearean world. He forgives—not so much because of his superior sympathy, but because of his superior wisdom. His mind works upon a plane which is far removed from the quarrels and the hatreds, the ambitions and the passions, the betrayals and the jealousies, and the oppressions and the retributions of the world into which he has been sent down to live. He is not a “stern censor” of life, but an amused, though somewhat sorrowful, onlooker. When Miranda for the first time sees human beings other than her father on the enchanted island, she rapturously exclaims, “O wonder . . . How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in’t!” But Prospero, smiling at her enthusiasm, replies, “’Tis new to thee.” He knows from experience that every human creature is “a devil, a born devil,” on whom his teachings are “all, all lost, quite lost.” *He believes in man, and yet he loves all mankind.*

Prospero is not only the best of Shakespeare’s creations, but he is Shakespeare himself at his best. Like Prospero, Shakespeare too is an enchanter whose magic art has peopled the earth with elves and puppets and sprites and men, who has “bedimm’d the noon-tide sun, call’d forth the mutinous winds, and ’twixt the green sea and the azured vault set roaring war.” Graves at his command “have waked their sleepers, oped, and let ’em forth” by his so potent art.

V

AND NOW, having reached the height of creation by creating *The Tempest*, Shakespeare, like Prospero, abjured his magic, broke his staff, and, folding up the bag of his enchantments, retired from the stage. He was through with teaching and amusing and scolding this dull-witted race of ours. From now on, he preferred to be an interested spectator.

He died in obscurity. The world knew nothing about the genius of Shakespeare. But then, Shakespeare cared nothing about the plaudits of the world.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Important Dates in Life of Samuel Johnson

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1709—September 18, born at Lichfield. | 1755—Completed Dictionary. |
| 1731—Left Oxford without a degree. | 1762—Received pension from George III. |
| 1735—Married Elizabeth Porter. | 1763—Met Boswell. |
| 1736—Went to London. | 1765—Published edition of Shakespeare. |
| 1738—Published satire, London. | Met the Thrales. |
| 1743—Published biography of Richard Savage. | 1775—Published Journey to the Hebrides. |
| 1747—Began Dictionary. | 1779-81—Wrote Lives of the Poets. |
| 1750-52—Published paper, The Rambler. | 1784—December 13, died. |

Samuel Johnson

1709-1784



MET Samuel Johnson—a big, brutal bear of a man, an implacable controversialist who laid his opponents low with a bludgeon, a morose, blubbering and blustering combination of the invalid and the prize-fighter, a glutton who started his daily round of voracity with eight peaches before breakfast, a pedant of pomposity who always put on his wig before he sat down to write, a bundle of superstitions who insisted upon touching every lamp post that he passed on the street, a roughneck who took delight in answering "every fool according to his folly" and who regarded everybody but himself as a fool. A young man once came to him for advice as to whether he should marry. "Sir," said Johnson, "I would advise no man to marry who is not likely to propagate understanding." His one purpose in life, said his critics, was to slay his opponent in a conversational duel . . . "This man is the most disagreeable snob in England."

Meet Samuel Johnson—a man who, to quote Oliver Goldsmith, "had nothing of the bear but his skin," an opponent who was always the first to seek a reconciliation, a fighter who knew how to smile in defeat, a cheerful acceptor of pain—once, when the doctors were operating on him (it was in the days before

ether), he urged them to cut deeper and finally took the knife into his own hands to show them how—a philosopher with strange ideas but with a “central sanity” in his mind, a lifelong invalid who bathed at Brighton in October and who, when he got drenched to the skin in the rain, refused to change his clothes because a friend was expecting him for dinner, a believer in social inequality who befriended the poor and insulted the rich—“you are certainly not better than the poor; give thanks to God that you are happier”—a lover of independence and hater of slavery—“how is it,” he said referring to the Americans, “that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?”—an eccentric whose greatest eccentricity was a kind heart in an unkind world. He had a habit of picking up all the stray animals and all the stray people from the gutters of London and of bringing them to live with him in his household. Let us for a moment visit him in this gloomy tenement of his on the north side of Fleet Street. As we mount the stairs, our ears are deafened by the barking of dogs and the meowing of cats and the screeching of parrots. We get to the top floor and enter the crowded rooms. Four old women and an old quack doctor are quarreling about the evils of destiny, whilst a Negro evangelist is trying to pacify them with quotations from the Scripture. We pass through this bedlam into the inner chamber, and here we find the “master” propped up in bed and entertaining a group of distinguished ladies and gentlemen with his favorite amusement—conversation about life . . . “This man is the most human creature in England.”

Such was the paradox that was Samuel Johnson—“rough, wise, severe, gentle, limited, lovable” pattern of the English character in the eighteenth century.

II

A FLOWER out of the mud. Johnson’s paternal ancestry was so obscure that he once said, “I can hardly tell who was my grand-

father." His mother's antecedents were equally obscure—simple, unlettered and unreremembered yeomen of Warwickshire.

Johnson's earliest memories, however, were concerned with literature. His father, a bookseller of Lichfield, allowed his awkward little son, "with a head too big for his years," to browse freely among the pastures of the printed page. Samuel learned to philosophize long before he learned to play.

He was a sickly child. Once his mother took him to London to be "touched" by Queen Anne for the scrofula. The Queen's touch had no effect on his disease, but it had a tremendous effect on his lifelong adoration for royalty.

And for learning. "I must be an educated man. I have had the privilege to meet the Queen!"

His mentality, even as a child, was amazing. The spinster who first taught him to read gave him a present of gingerbread and told him he was the smartest scholar she had ever had. At Lichfield School, though he played none of the games, he was the acknowledged leader of the boys because "he knew something about everything." At Stourbridge, the school which he entered at fifteen, he astounded his teachers by reciting a Latin poem which he had read only once. "Don't you ever forget what you read?" asked his instructor, Baretti. "Who can forget, sir?" replied Johnson.

After his graduation from Stourbridge he spent two years in his father's bookshop, reading—"not voyages and travels, but all literature, sir." When he came up to Oxford, the Master of the college said he was "the best qualified" student that had ever matriculated there.

The best qualified, but not the most disciplined. He spent a great part of his time "lounging at the college gates with a circle of young students, whom he was entertaining with his wit and keeping from their studies."

Speaking later of his college life, Johnson confessed that he neglected his studies, especially in the classics. "The result is that I have remained an ignoramus in Greek and in Latin." The word

"ignoramus" must be taken with a rather generous pinch of salt when we remember that Johnson's remedy for sleeplessness was to turn Greek epigrams into Latin verse.

Johnson was a poor scholar in but a single sense—the material. Indeed, his poverty prevented him from finishing his course at Oxford and from getting his degree. Frequently he was unable to attend his lectures because he didn't have any shoes. His two financial props—his father's book business and a promised loan from a Shropshire friend—both failed him; and he was obliged (December, 1729) to leave Oxford and to return to Lichfield.

Two months later his father died, leaving him an inheritance of twenty pounds and a handful of unsalable books.

With this capital he set out to conquer the world—and failed. He tried ushering in a school at Market Bosworth, clerking in a bookstore at Birmingham, translating a Jesuit treatise on Abyssinia, and raising subscriptions for the poems of Politian—a man very few had heard of, and nobody cared to read. Johnson's talents were definitely not of the financial type.

Nor of the practical type in any sense whatsoever. Unable to support himself, he took on the additional burden of a wife—a woman twice his age who even in her youthful days had been "nothing to look at."

And—miracle of miracles!—he loved her with a romantic and passionate devotion. While his friends snickered at his "blindness," he spoke to them rapturously of his "beautiful Tetty." A somewhat domineering Tetty, who led him by the leash—and he liked it. "Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog." But what could he do? Whenever he upbraided her, she burst into tears. "And how can you see a woman you love in tears?"

His love for his wife continued long beyond the grave. Eighteen years after her death he noted in his diary that he had "less pleasure in any good that happens to me, because she is not here to share it." And thirty years after her death, when his own end

was approaching, he wrote, "Perhaps Tetty knows that I pray for her. Perhaps Tetty is now praying for me. God help us both."

✓ Love is timeless. The climate of May is not unlike the climate of October; and the difference in the color of the foliage is but an added zest to the lover of beauty. "Sir," said Johnson to his friend, Beauclerk, "ours was a love marriage on both sides."

A love marriage, and a marriage which brought new ambitions with the new responsibilities. Johnson began to write books that were closer to the interests of his day. He composed a tragedy, *Irene*; a satiric poem, *London*, after the manner of Juvenal; a series of articles for the *Gentleman's Magazine*; and a number of speeches for the members of Parliament. Once, when a friend at a dinner praised a famous oration of Chatham's, Johnson startled the company with the quiet remark, "That speech I wrote in a garret on Exeter Street."

The most important work that he wrote at this period, however, was his biography of Richard Savage. This mysterious friend of Johnson's, who "suffered from much misfortune and many vices," possessed an insatiable thirst for brandy and beauty. He and Johnson found little in common save their mutual delight in intellectual conversation. They spent many a night together walking the streets and talking about the world and Richard Savage. Johnson was fascinated by his friend's story—most likely fictitious. Savage claimed that he was the illegitimate son of Lady Macclesfield by Lord Rivers. His mother, he said, had repudiated him from childhood, leaving him to the untender mercies of a poor and ignorant woman. His father, unable to determine either the identity or the number of his offspring, had left his entire fortune "to about twenty paltry whores." And then, to add injury to insult, Lady Macclesfield had tried her utmost to have her son hanged on a trumped-up charge of murder.

These, and many other lurid details, form the story of "the life of a blackguard written by the pen of an angel." And so interesting was this story that Sir Joshua Reynolds, having taken it up casually with his elbow leaning upon a mantelpiece, finished the

entire book while standing in the same position and "found his arm quite benumbed when he got to the end."

Johnson was now acquiring the friendship of important people—the painter Reynolds, the historian Gibbon, the orator Edmund Burke, the poet Goldsmith, the statesman Charles Fox, the actor Garrick. It was through the help of Garrick that he secured the production of *Irene*—a financial success and artistic failure. Johnson himself was aware of the shortcomings of *Irene*. The story is told that a certain Mr. Pot called it "the finest tragedy of modern times"—to which extravagant compliment Johnson retorted, "If Pot says so, Pot lies."

Johnson realized that the stage was not his medium. All his characters talked like Johnson—and when everybody's so brilliant, nobody shines. The "master" decided to exercise his conversational genius in the clubroom, at the tavern, on the sidewalk—wherever the sunlight of his wisdom would not only outsparkle his companions, but inspire them to richer feelings and better thoughts.

And fortunately for Johnson, and for the world, he met (in 1763) James Boswell, a man who became inseparable from the "master," and who absorbed his genius as the charcoal absorbs the sun. The brilliance of Boswell has been eclipsed under the glow of Johnson's personality. But Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is perhaps the greatest biography ever penned by the hand of man. In the fire of the charcoal we get a good reproduction of the flaming sun.

Boswell worshiped Johnson; and Johnson, to quote his own expression, held Boswell "in my heart of hearts." He realized Boswell's weakness; he acknowledged that his biographer was "vain, a babbler, a wine-bibber, a man of frequently irregular and ill-governed life." But he pardoned his friend's follies, looking upon them as the common follies of mankind. "All the decent people at Lichfield get drunk every night." He knew that under a faulty covering lay a faultless heart. Though heir to the life and the fortune of a Scottish laird, young Boswell—he was Johnson's junior by twenty-one years—had generously thrown himself into

the struggle for Corsican independence, had mingled with the disinherited stepchildren of the world, had finally placed himself at the feet, not of a minister or a king, but of a man of lowly origin and vulgar habits whose only claim to distinction was a wise and noble soul.

They were as two brothers—the man of boorish nobility and the man of noble birth. They ate, talked, traveled together—Johnson observing and recording every aspect of life, and Boswell observing and recording every aspect of Johnson. And it is largely through Boswell's eyes that we see Johnson today.

For Johnson's literary work is hardly known today. His *Dictionary* is more prejudiced than accurate—he defines *patriotism*, for example, as *the last refuge of a scoundrel*. His *Rasselas*—a fantasy which he wrote in a week to pay for his mother's funeral—has about as much lift to it as an eagle with feathers of lead. His annotated edition of Shakespeare overwhelms the fire of poetry under an avalanche of Johnsonian crudition. His essays in *The Rambler*—a semi-weekly newspaper which he published for three years—are uncharted excursions into boredom. And even the lightest of his work, the *Lives of the Poets*, violates the one vital formula for biographical writing—"the art of biography is that of giving life to the dead." Johnson's *Lives*, on the contrary, are full of learning and empty of life. He presents the poets as a row of symmetrical mummies instead of living men.

Johnson's writing is dead. But his conversation, as recorded by Boswell, will remain forever alive. The range of his eloquence covered every subject under the sun. Like Socrates, he confessed, that he knew nothing; but most people, he insisted, knew even less—for they didn't know that they knew nothing. Above all things he hated hypocrisy, insincerity and pretense. "Clear your mind of cant . . . Never lay claim to goods or to thoughts that you do not possess." No matter what the subject of his conversation, he always reduced everything to the "bottom of sense." If his writings are for the pedants, his conversations are for the man in the street. "After all," a London cabman recently remarked

to an American visitor, "I agree with Doctor Johnson who says, a man may travel all over the world and see nothing better than his dinner." When people met him for the first time after having read his work, they were amazed. They had expected to see an author, and they found a man. A man who loved to stick pins into the bubbles of idle gossip. An acquaintance once remarked that every fashionable Frenchman, as soon as he married, took an opera girl into his keeping. And this, concluded the acquaintance, is a universal custom. "Pray, sir," said Johnson, "how many opera girls are there in France?"

"About fourscore."

"Well, then," observed Johnson, "in that case there can be only fourscore fashionable Frenchmen who resort to this practice."

His tongue was caustic, but never mean. Above all, he liked to approach the problems of life—and of death—with an honest gaiety. One day a Quaker was denouncing the vanity of the current fashions in dress. "My friend," said Johnson, "let us not be found, when our Master calls us, ripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues." On another occasion, referring to the same subject, he declared that "a man who cannot get to Heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither in a grey one."

His honest and good-natured tolerance extended to everything save his two pet aversions—the Whigs and the Scotch. "The first Whig," he said, "was the Devil." And his closest descendants are the Scotchmen. Once a friend remarked that "poor old England is lost." Whereupon Johnson retorted: "Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that poor old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it." Together with Boswell he paid a visit to Scotland, and came back unimpressed. "The noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees is the highway that leads him to London."

Johnson loved his London above everything else. He loved it, not for its commercial preëminence, but for its intellectual pleasures which, to him, were the only justification for human existence. "He who is tired of London is tired of life."

III

JOHNSON never grew tired of life. And he found twenty-four hours too few for a day of zestful living. He hated to go to bed; and when he did, he was always ready to "tumble out" for an extra round of the taverns. One night his friend Beauclerk thought he would "go and knock up" old Sam Johnson. In answer to his pounding, Johnson came to the door, poker in hand and nightcap on his head. "Who is it, a burglar?"

"No, it's only Topham Beauclerk."

"What time is it?"

"Three A.M."

"Time for a good frisk, you dog."

A few minutes later the two cronies, hand in hand, went to meet the dawn at a Covent Garden tavern, and then topped it off with a boatripe to Billingsgate.

Always ready for a frisk. Always full of laughter. "Echoes of that huge laughter," writes Max Beerbohm, "have come ringing down the ages."

It was with this ringing laughter that he greeted his friends, confounded his enemies, parried his misfortunes, and waited for his death. A big, shapeless, hulking, mischievous child-philosopher to the very end. Once, at sixty, he rolled down a hill because "I haven't had a roll for a long time."

It was with this ringing laughter that he enlivened the household of the Thrales—a wealthy brewer and his wife—with whom he made a "second home" for sixteen years. And it was with this cosmic laughter at the incongruity of life that he once picked up a woman lying in the gutter, "so much exhausted"—we are quoting Boswell—"that she could not walk. He took her upon his back and carried her to his house, where he discovered that she was one of those wretched females who had fallen into the lowest state of vice, poverty, and disease. Instead of harshly upbraiding

her, he had her taken care of with all tenderness for a long time at considerable expense till she was restored to health."

Laughter is akin to pity—and to piety. Like Voltaire, Johnson laughed at life in order to keep himself from crying. And in his laughter he found hope. Life is a matter of great sadness. Without hope—that is, without faith in an ultimate righting of wrongs—human existence is a succession of losses. To this evil there is but a single remedy—religious hope. "He that grows old without religious hope, as he declines into imbecility and feels pains and sorrows crowding upon him, falls into a gulf of bottomless miseries . . . where he finds only new gradations of anguish and precipices of horror."

From this "gulf of bottomless miseries" Johnson found an escape in a laughing acceptance of the ultimate rightness of things. With Browning he might have said, "God's in His heaven" and consequently "all's right with the world." He composed, for his guidance, a number of prayers; and he felt always, whether in his serious or in his serene moments, that he was "under the eye of Omnipotence." One night at dinner someone mentioned the nineteenth psalm, whereupon Johnson recited it while his face "was almost as if it had been the face of an angel."

"The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is certain, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are righteous, rejoicing the heart." In this faith he approached his end. "I may be conquered, but I will not capitulate." In 1783 he suffered a paralytic stroke from which he recovered sufficiently to take a trip to Kent and Wiltshire. The following year he suffered a relapse, recovered, and "began life anew" with the formation of a dining club among those of his friends who were still alive. "Let us die feasting."

But his friends knew that the black camel was kneeling at the door. And on December 14, 1784, the *Gentleman's Magazine* recorded the passing, "without a pang," of "the great and good Samuel Johnson, the pride of English literature and of human nature."

GOETHE

Important Dates in Life of Goethe

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1749—Born at Frankfort-on-Main. | 1789—Had son by Christiane Vulpius. |
| 1765—Entered Leipzig University. | 1791—Appointed director of ducal theater. |
| 1770—Began legal studies at Strassburg. | 1794—Started friendship with Schiller. |
| 1773—Wrote first important drama, <i>Götz von Berlichingen</i> . | 1800—Completed <i>Wilhelm Meister</i> .
Completed first part of <i>Faust</i> . |
| 1774—Wrote <i>The Sorrows of Werther</i> . | 1805—Schiller died. |
| 1775—Settled down at Weimar. | 1832—Completed second part of <i>Faust</i> .
Died. |
| 1777—Began <i>Wilhelm Meister</i> . | |
| 1786—Went to Italy. | |

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

1749-1832



THE YOUNG MEN and the young women of the eighteenth century were *Modernists*. Like the young men and women of today, they were dissatisfied with the world in which they found themselves and tried to create in its place a world that would be nearer to their heart's desire. In France and in America the rebellion took a political turn. In other countries, however, and especially in Germany, the revolt against tradition was purely intellectual. The soldiers of the German revolution discarded the antiquated ideas of their nation, but they left the antiquated government alone. There was a revolution of the pen, and not of the sword. They liberated the minds of their countrymen, but they were not much concerned about their bodies. They believed in free thought, but not in free action. They were the conservative radicals of the eighteenth century.

The leader of these intellectual revolutionists was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. At the age of six he rebelled against God. At seven he expressed his doubts about the justice of men. At eight he composed a Latin essay in which he compared the wisdom of the Pagans with that of the Christians. At eleven he wrote a cosmopolitan novel in seven languages. At twelve he fought a

duel. At fourteen he fell violently in love for the first time. At seventy-four he fell violently in love for the last time. And at eighty-two he completed his greatest poem, the second part of *Faust*.

II

GOETHE was born in 1749. His great-grandfather had been a blacksmith and his grandfather was a tailor. But the tailor made a man out of his son, Johann Caspar, who became the Imperial Councilor of Frankfurt and promptly forgot about his humble origin.

Goethe, the son of Johann Caspar, never mentioned the blacksmith and the tailor among his ancestors.

Like the great French philosopher, Voltaire, he was born half-dead. But unlike Voltaire, he enjoyed good health for the greater part of his life. In all his eighty-three years he suffered only three serious illnesses. He was one of those few fortunate mortals endowed with a perfect mind in a perfect body.

He was educated at home. His father, somewhat of a classical scholar and a strict disciplinarian, put him through a course of study which trained the intellect rather than the imagination. His mother, on the other hand, a simple, hearty, joyous and well-read *Jungfrau*—she was only eighteen at the time of Goethe's birth—stimulated his poetic faculty by telling him stories of her own making and by encouraging him to help her in the weaving of the plots and in the creation of the characters. "To my father," he said, "I owe my serious outlook on life; to my little mother, my love for telling tales."

His father wanted him to study law and to become a college professor. But Goethe was interested neither in law nor in teaching. To please his father, he entered the University of Leipzig (1765); but to please himself, he became a student of life rather than of books.

Plentifully supplied with money, for his father was well-to-do, he proceeded to break through the conventional shell of his home

environment and to experiment recklessly with the ways of the world. For his teachers he had not the slightest respect. "I fancied I knew as much about God and the world as the professors themselves." He felt that he could learn much more about life if he neglected the classroom and went into the haunts of the people. "In society, concerts, theater, feasting, promenades, the time flies. Ha, it goes gloriously! But also expensively. The devil knows how my purse feels it!"

One of his fellow-students, writing about the unrestrained conduct of Goethe at this time, remarked that it would be easier to "influence the trees and the rocks than to bring Goethe to his senses."

But he came to his senses of his own accord. Throughout his life he experimented with wine and women, and then he transmuted his experience into song. Having learned all he needed to know about the society of Leipzig, he left it for the solitude of the country, where he took long rambles, reading his Shakespeare and his Homer and dreaming his poetical dreams.

For he lived in order to sing. He had begun his literary career as a mere child. And now, at the age of seventeen, he dashed off his first important drama, dealing—of all the subjects in the world—with the rascalities and the adulteries of married people! *Die Mitschuldigen* (*The Fellow Sinners*) is written with a sophistication that is astonishing in a youngster of seventeen. Like most of the adolescent dramas, it is a story with a moral; but the moral has within it the concentrated wisdom of all the sad old men who have sinned and suffered for their sins. "Inasmuch as the majority of us are guilty," concludes the indulgent young philosopher of Leipzig, "the wisest thing for all of us to do is to forgive and forget."

III

THE dissipation of his Leipzig days—and nights—came near to putting an end to his life. In the summer of 1768 he was seized with a violent hemorrhage, and for a time it was doubtful

whether he would recover. When at last he was able to leave his bed, he returned home—to an adoring mother and a disappointed father. Herr Johann Caspar Goethe had tried to make a lawyer out of his son, and the boy had turned out to be nothing but a poet!

The Councilor made another attempt to put Wolfgang on what he considered to be the right road. This time he sent him to Strassburg, to complete his studies "without any further nonsense" and to get his doctor's degree in Jurisprudence.

But here too, as in Leipzig, Goethe neglected his law and resumed his study of life. He dabbled in art, he learned to play the cello, he took up medicine, he philosophized, he flirted, and he became the leader of the Strassburg intelligentsia. His health was completely restored now. He walked through the streets of the city like a Greek God. On one occasion, when he entered a restaurant, the diners laid down their knives and their forks to stare at the magnificent young stranger.

He was, to use his own expression, "intoxicated with youth," and all those who came into contact with him were infected with something of his own spirit.

An excellent swordsman and rider, and a singer of magical phrases such as Germany had never heard before, he turned the heads of all the Strassburg Fräuleins. And his own head was almost always in a whirl.

But if he loved easily, he easily forgot. Whether jilting or jilted, he translated his experience into a poem and then turned to his next adventure.

In his eagerness to study life from every possible angle, he fell in with all sorts of people—inn-keepers, inn-keepers' daughters, evangelists, dancing masters, merchants, manufacturers, workers, rabbis and priests. And, like Spinoza, he found something lovable and divine in everyone that he met.

He was especially fond of the stage. A passionate admirer of Shakespeare, he tried to transfuse some of the rich blood of the Elizabethan drama into the anemic productions of the German

theater. With the exuberant optimism of youth, he set out to revolutionize not only the *art* but the very *thought* of his nation. He examined the history of Germany for dramatic material that would give full scope to his lawless genius. He found it in the life of Götz von Berlichingen, the Robin Hood of Germany. This man's exploits against the bishops and the barons in behalf of the peasants inflamed Goethe's imagination into producing one of the wildest, yet one of the most magnificent, of German dramas. It became for a time the Bible of the younger generation, and Goethe was worshiped as the prophet of the new religion of unrestraint.

Yet, much to his father's gratification, he was able to spare enough time from his "lawless activities" to obtain a degree as doctor of law. His father sent him, for further training, to the Supreme Court of Wetzlar. But Goethe noticed on his arrival that there were twenty thousand cases awaiting the Imperial Judges' decision, and that it would take them no less than three hundred and thirty-three years to get through with all these cases. This settled his own case. He lost all respect for the law and definitely turned to literature as his life's work.

During his short stay at Wetzlar he fell, as usual, desperately in love. This time the situation was complicated by the fact that Lotchen, the young lady of his choice, was already engaged. For a time he thought of committing suicide. He kept a dagger under his pillow, and every night he tried to muster up sufficient courage to plunge it into his heart. Finally, however, he decided to write a novel about his unfortunate love affair, and to kill the hero in the novel instead of killing himself. The result was *The Sorrows of Werther*, a book of romantic nonsense and sublime beauty. It is the autobiography of a misfit—a sensitive artist who does not feel at home among his fellows and who finds companionship only in the solitude of the fields. It is an elegy on the sadness of life, a hymn to the joyousness of death.

The Sorrows of Werther produced a tremendous effect upon the German public. All the young men imitated Werther's blue

coat and yellow waistcoat, and the girls adopted Lottchen's white dress with the pink bows. In Germany the book was sold like a newspaper on the street corners; and even in China, Werther and Lottchen were modeled in porcelain. In some places the more sentimental admirers of the book went so far as to organize "Werther societies for the suppression of life." An epidemic of suicides swept over Europe as a tribute to the genius of Goethe.

But Goethe himself had no desire to put an end to his life now. Leaving his love and his book and his admirers behind, he pressed on to new fields and new adventures.

IV

ALTHOUGH he flouted the conventions, Goethe had a deep-seated reverence for authority. "I cannot blame you," he writes to one of his friends, "for living in the world and making acquaintances amongst men of power and influence. Intercourse with the great is always advantageous to him who knows properly how to use it." And so, when Prince Karl August asked him to come to his court at Weimar, Goethe accepted the invitation with alacrity.

He reached Weimar (in 1775) at the age of twenty-six. He stayed there for the rest of his life. Taking up his residence in a "garden-house" near the palace, he divided his time between poetry and politics. He became not only the devoted priest of Apollo, but the equally devoted servant of Karl August. He was the German Confucius who tried to teach his prince how to rule; and in so doing, he gave up his own independence. Confining his rebellious spirit to his books, he became in his private life one of the most submissive of courtiers. On one occasion, when he was walking with Beethoven, the prince's retinue happened to pass by. The composer, who respected nothing but his art, threw out his chest and walked defiantly through the pompous crowd. Goethe, however, who worshiped royalty even more than his art, stepped aside, took off his hat, and bowed in deepest reverence. For he was a true son of Germany. He was proud of his

GOETHE

distinction as the poet-laureate of the world; but he was even more proud of his dignity as the private secretary of one of the least important of German princes.

Saxe-Weimar, the little province over which Karl August ruled, boasted an army of only 600 men. But it was an army of little tin gods adored by the military idolatry of the Germans. Every German prince, even though his domain consisted of only a few acres, was constrained to support an army for the worship of his subjects. One of Karl August's fellow princes, for example, boasted a "superb military force" of seven officers and two men in the ranks!

Such was the childish pretentiousness of official Germany in the eighteenth century. And Goethe, in spite of his great genius, was not altogether free from it. Yet life at the court of Weimar was gay, and his duties sat lightly upon his shoulders. He made hunting and skating popular, and he turned flirting into one of the most fashionable amusements of the day. "We are somewhat mad here," he writes in one of his letters, "and play the devil's own game." If he sacrificed his independence to Karl August, he got from him in return "what the great seldom bestow—affection, leisure, confidence, garden and house." He loved his art, but he was equally fond of his comfort. He was not a prophet who was willing to die for Truth, but a poet who was anxious to live for Beauty.

V

FOR FIFTY YEARS he made Weimar the literary center of the world. He gathered about him a group of brilliant men and women who, under his leadership, discussed philosophy, devoted themselves to poetry, and played at love. He organized and became the director of a Little Theater, and he wrote for it some of the greatest dramas of the century. As long as his youth lasted, the tone of his writing remained wild, and at times flippant. In *Stella*, for example, he allowed the hero to live with his wife and his mistress at the same time—to the mutual satisfaction of

all three. This "plea in favor of bigamy" aroused violent opposition on the part of the public. And so, with his tongue in his cheek, Goethe rewrote the end of the play. He got his hero, who was unable to quit either his wife or his mistress, to solve the difficulty by blowing out his brains.

Gradually, however, we find this note of exuberant irregularity less and less dominant in Goethe's works. Finally it disappeared altogether. The intoxication of his youth had subsided. From now on, he was no longer a rebel who wanted to destroy the world, but a philosopher who tried to understand it.

His lifelong quest was now for more light—more beauty. He sought for beauty even in ugliness, and for dignity in the midst of humility. Like Walt Whitman, he was passionately fond of human beings, however lowly their station. If he bowed to princes, he did not shun the society of paupers. Throughout his life he was on the most intimate terms with "the butchers and the bakers and the candlestick makers" of the world. "How strong my love has returned upon me for these lower classes!" he wrote after visiting a group of miners. "These so-called lower classes are, in God's eyes, assuredly the highest!"

His expressions of sympathy for the underdog were not mere rhetoric. Out of the meager salary of \$1000 a year which he received as the Councilor of Karl August, he supported two strangers who had appealed to him for aid. Though spared from suffering for the greater part of his life, he could yet sympathize with the sufferings of others. For he possessed the imaginative faculty to see beyond the horizon of his own existence.

His was perhaps the most versatile mind of the eighteenth century. He was not only a poet and a painter and a musician, but a scientist of no mean achievement. As a poet, he recognized the absolute unity under the apparent diversity of things. And as a scientist, he tried to demonstrate this unity. He made a thorough study of botany and anatomy and the theory of colors. He wrote a book on the metamorphoses (the structural changes) of plants in which he showed that flowers are nothing but glori-

fied leaves—leaves turned into poems, so to speak. He examined the human skull and he discovered in it a bone—the intermaxillary—which established the relationship between man and the lower animals.

Like Terence, he was interested in everything pertaining to the human race—in everything, except war. For Goethe was essentially a man of peace. There was nothing in him of the Prussian lust for conquest. When Karl August was fighting against the French, he invited Goethe to come to his camp and to watch the maneuvers of his troops. Goethe accepted the invitation; but instead of interesting himself in the battles, he made a study of the stones and the flowers in the neighborhood of the camp. He had a deep and passionate love for his country, but he refused to be a chauvinist. Charged with being a slacker because he would not write inflammatory war songs, he replied: "I have never uttered anything which I have not experienced . . . I have composed love songs only when I have loved. How, then, can I write songs of hatred without having hated?"

VI

THE middle period of his life was blessed with three of the greatest of human blessings: a loving wife, a son, and a devoted friend. In 1788, at the age of 39, he met Christiane Vulpius. At first they indulged in a free relationship; but after several years of this freedom they yielded to the "greater freedom of marriage." In 1789 his son was born; and in 1794 he became intimately acquainted with Schiller. Goethe was 45 at the time, and Schiller was 35.

The friendship between Goethe and Schiller was a more radiant poem than any which either Goethe or Schiller ever wrote. It was a friendship between a demigod and a dying man (for Schiller had already lost one of his lungs). Goethe was a Pagan, with a reverence for beauty. Schiller was a Christian, with a passion for justice. Both had started out as rebels, but

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

both had surrendered at last. Goethe had been tamed by his good fortune, and Schiller by his poverty. But the two poets still believed in the rebelliousness of Art. Poetry, to them, was the sacred medium which would transform men into supermen. And so they worked together, these two apostles of salvation through the religion of the Word, and each of them supplemented and encouraged the genius of the other. When Schiller died, after their all-too-brief comradeship of eleven years, Goethe shut himself up into his room and wept like a child. "The half of my existence," he wrote to an acquaintance, "is gone from me . . . My diary is a blank at this period. The white pages intimate the blank in my life."

Goethe lived to an old age, but he had to pay the price of loneliness in return for the gift of a long life. One by one he lost all those whom he loved—his dearest friends, his sister, his wife, and finally his only son. But he went bravely ahead, turning his sorrows as well as his joys into immortal song. "I have never uttered anything which I have not experienced." He wrote sixty books of his spiritual and his mental experiences—lyrics, elegies, satires, epics, dramas, essays and novels—fantastic fables about elves and ghosts and goblins, and philosophical stories about myths and mortals and devils and gods. Finally he gathered all his genius into one masterpiece and created *Faust*. It took him thirty years to write the first half, and twenty-five years longer to complete the second half.

VII

THE purpose of Goethe in writing this drama was to understand Humanity—to measure its powers and to define its duties. The keynote of the drama is struck in the Prologue. God and the Devil make a wager about the soul of Man. The Devil has no respect for mortals. He is the everlasting Skeptic, the spirit of denial. He believes that *not to be* is better than *to be*. He sees no sense in "destiny's ceaseless play" which creates men only to

destroy them. He would prefer the "eternal emptiness" out of which the universe started upon its "needless journey" through time and space. His business, therefore, is to thwart the creation of God and to deny the goodness of men. "Even the old Doctor Faust, the most learned and the most upright of mortals," maintains the Devil, "can easily fall a prey to my wiles if only I should take the trouble to tempt him."

But God knows better. It is true, he admits, that the vision of Man is imperfect, so that he struggles forever through a haze of semi-darkness. "He strives and sins throughout his life." And yet, through his very sinning, "he struggles instinctively toward the light."

And so it is agreed that the Devil is to tempt Faust and to see whether he can destroy the immortal part of his soul. In accordance with the wager, the Devil is to be declared the winner if Faust ever finds the passing moment (of mortal existence) so beautiful that he is loath to move on from that moment to the next.

In the first half of the story, which is familiar to most readers, Goethe relates how the Devil restores the youth of Faust and tempts him with many of the selfish joys of life—beauty, wealth, sensuality, recklessness, and the pleasures without the responsibilities of love. Guided by the Devil, Faust seduces Marguerite and then abandons her to her sins and her sorrows. Throughout this first part of the story, Faust is possessed by "a passion for error." But in all his erring ways he finds not a moment of happiness, not a single incident to which he is able to say, "Verweile doch, du bist so schön." (Linger awhile, thou art so beautiful.)

After the death of Marguerite, the Devil tries to win him with temptations of a different sort. Faust, who is the symbol of Universal Man, is eager to try every experience of life, "to hare his breast to every pang, to know all human joy and sorrow," to live and work with men, "and to share with them the shipwreck of mankind."

Accordingly the Devil enables Faust to become (like Goethe)

a councilor at the royal court. Here, by his able service, Faust wins gratitude and honors—but no happiness. Dissatisfied with his present life, he conjures up for himself the life of the past. He brings out of antiquity the spirit of Helen of Troy, restores her to life, and tries to become wedded to her (just as Goethe tried to become wedded to the classical thought of the Greek poets). But when Faust embraces Helen, she vanishes, leaving only her cloak behind. It is useless even for a Faust, or a Goethe, to try to understand the glory that was Greece. In spite of all their endeavors, the beautiful soul of antiquity escapes them, and they are left with nothing but the outward garment in their hands.

And thus Faust moves on from one experience to another, and finds satisfaction in none. "His very walk is a series of falls." Whatever he undertakes to do, whether of good or of evil, ends in failure, or in an empty triumph which is even worse than failure. He wins an important battle for his emperor, and he finds that his victory in war means death and devastation for both sides. The Devil offers him cities, kingdoms, castles, beautiful women, glorious achievements, and eternal fame. But Faust is sick of it all. The arc of his life has begun to turn downward. The pleasures of youth and the achievements of middle age have brought him nothing but disillusion. Care has taken possession of his house, and the fires and desires of his youth have all turned to ashes. He is stricken with blindness, and he is ready at last to give up his lifelong quest for happiness.

But—strangely enough—at the very moment that he renounces happiness, he finds it. He starts upon a vast project to reclaim the swamps near the sea and to make them fit for human habitation. Here he plans to build homes, upon free soil, for millions of people who will best enjoy their freedom by conquering it anew with their labor every day. This thought fills him with a great joy. This is the self-forgetful goal toward which he has subconsciously struggled all his life. This at last is the golden moment to which he can say, "Linger awhile, thou art so beautiful!"

And now that he has arrived at the supreme moment of his life, his life comes to an end. Apparently the Devil has won the bet. He claims the soul of Faust as the price of his victory. But the angels descend amidst a shower of roses and carry his soul to heaven. Faust has erred grievously, to be sure, but through all his erring he has struggled instinctively toward the light.

The first to greet him in heaven is Marguerite. She has sinned and died through the sins of Faust. But all this is forgiven and forgotten. It is her mission now to show him the way. *Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan*. Woman is the eternal savior of Man.

VIII

AND NOW, having completed the supreme work of his life, Goethe—like Faust—was ready to sleep. His numerous admirers were preparing a royal celebration in honor of his eighty-second birthday. In order to escape from the festivities, he went to the mountains of Ilmenau. There, in a hut where he and Karl August had often stayed together, he saw the lines which he had penciled on the wall a number of years ago.

"Over all the hilltops, there is quiet peace; in the treetops, thou canst scarce perceive the slightest breath; the little birds in the forest have stilled their voices. Be patient now—soon thou too wilt be at rest."

Brushing away the tears from his eyes, he re-echoed the last words—"Soon thou too wilt be at rest."

He returned home. For a little while longer he sang those magical songs in which—as Heine observes—"the word embraces you while the thought imprints a kiss." At last, on the 16th of March in 1832, he was unable to get up from his bed. Six days later, amidst the hushed whispers of his household, he closed his eyes—and the song of his life trailed off into eternal silence.

His last audible words were—"More light!"

SIMON BOLIVAR

Important Dates in Life of Simon Bolivar

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1783—Born in Caracas. | 1819—Crossed Andes with
"Army of Liberation."
Defeated the Spanish
army at Boyaca (August
7). |
| 1801—Married Maria Teresa
Toro. | Became president of lib-
erated Venezuela (De-
cember 17). |
| 1803—Wife died. | 1820-26—Fought for liberation
of other South American
countries. |
| 1805—Traveled in Europe. | 1828—Escaped attempt to assas-
sinate him. |
| 1806—Returned to Caracas, "a
rebel dedicated to free-
dom." | 1830—Died at San Pedro. |
| 1811—Declared Venezuelan in-
dependence from Spain. | |
| 1813—Started war for liberation
of Venezuela. | |
| 1815—Defeated, exiled to Ja-
maica. | |
| 1817—Returned to Venezuela. | |

Simon Bolivar

1783-1830



IT WAS a dangerous thing to rebel against the Spanish rule in South America. In 1781, when Tupac-Amaru attempted to liberate Peru, the Spanish governor tore out his tongue and then compelled him to look on while his wife and his son were being pulled apart by four horses driven in different directions. At the end of the spectacle, he himself was accorded the same treatment. The story of this atrocity was still fresh upon everybody's lips when Bolivar was born (July 24, 1783). His father wanted to call him Santiago. But the priest who baptized the infant gave him the name of Simon. "I have a presentiment that this child will some day become the Simon Maccabeus (the old Judean liberator) of the New World."

Dedicated from his infancy to rebellion, this child of a noble family in Venezuela grew up into a reckless, restless and audacious youngster. Having lost his father at the age of three, he was put into the care of the distinguished Caracas jurist, Miguel José Sanz. His escapades were at once the admiration and the terror of Don José. "My child," he once remarked, "you are a regular *polvorin* (horn of gunpowder)." Whereupon the child retorted, "Then you had better keep away from me—I'm liable to explode."

Slight, wiry, effervescent, he captivated everybody with his impudent dark eyes and his ingratiating bright smile. He lived like a prince in an enchanted tale. At the death of his mother—he was nine years old at the time—he came into a considerable estate. Mines of valuable mineral deposits, spacious *haciendas*, vast acres of sugar cane, mills, ranches, distilleries, fruit orchards and thousands upon thousands of animals and slaves—all these were his to share with his brother and his two sisters.

But Simon cared next to nothing for his wealth. He was interested only in his adventures. Gathering around him a group of mischievous youngsters, he became a “constant pain and irritation” to the conventional old magistrates and merchants of Caracas. He accepted as his tutor in all his escapades a vagabond philosopher by the name of Rodriguez—a half-cracked utopian who walked around with a copy of Rousseau’s *Émile* in his pocket and with all sorts of social and political panaceas in his head. “In this crazy world of ours,” he remarked to Bolivar, “there are two outstanding facts—the sacredness of the human body and the stupidity of the human mind.” And to demonstrate the “sacredness” of his own body to the “stupid” minds of his contemporaries, he occasionally appeared in public *au naturel*. He was among the first of the nudists.

But the crazy doctrines of Rodriguez had their serious as well as their frivolous side. This “Socrates of South America” taught Bolivar the importance of a healthy body for the spiritual tussle in the arena of life. He took his young pupil on long and dangerous hikes through the forests and over the mountains of Venezuela. Together they traveled on muleback to the Bolivar ranches where Simon learned from the *vaqueros* (cowboys) the art of taming wild horses, of wielding the lasso and the lance, and of galloping full tilt to the side of a bull, seizing his tail with one hand and hurling him to the ground with a sudden snap of the wrist.

Rodriguez looked on with admiration as his young protégé became the most iron-muscled expert among the *vaqueros*. “You

will need this iron constitution in the great battles that await you." Venezuela, South America, the entire world needed to be reshaped. The priest had named him Simon because he was destined to be a liberator. Eagerly he absorbed his tutor's ideas about a new age of freedom. There were great events stirring in South America—rebellions, suppressions, executions, new rebellions. Bolivar and his tutor were among those who witnessed the decapitation of the revolutionist, José Chirinos, in the public square of Caracas. In one of the numerous uprisings Rodriguez himself was involved. Thanks to the influence of Bolivar's family, he managed to escape the death penalty. But he was compelled to leave the country.

Bolivar missed his tutor. But he found consolation in the arms of his beautiful cousins, the Aristiguietas—a couple of warm-blooded young ladies with receptive ears and prodigal hearts. "When I die," he observed to a friend, "I hope to go to Purgatory; for there I shall be able to continue my flirtations with the Aristiguietas."

His flirtations, however, formed but an episode in his restless life. He enlisted in the militia, and the impetuous lover proved himself an equally impetuous soldier. At the end of two years of maneuvering over the *llanos*, he was commissioned *alferez* (sub-lieutenant).

And then he directed his adventures toward the Old World. On January 19, 1799, he set sail for Madrid where his uncle, Esteban Palacio, enjoyed a favored position in the palace of the king and—it was whispered—in the boudoir of the queen.

Bolivar came to Madrid highly recommended as a loyal subject of King Carlos and Queen Maria Luisa. Yet within a few months an order was issued for his arrest. He was suspected of having joined a conspiracy, together with his uncle Esteban, against the royal couple. He fled to Paris where he paid homage to Napoleon, the "savior of the French Republic," and made love to another member of the far-flung and fascinating Aristiguieta family. In the midst of his flirtation he learned that the king's

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

charges against him had been dropped. Whereupon he promptly left his French girl, returned to Madrid, and married a Spanish girl. Bolivar was only nineteen at the time.

The young couple set sail for Caracas. Here they enjoyed a honeymoon of uninterrupted fiestas given by their friends in their honor. And after their honeymoon they settled down to a life of idyllic happiness in one of Bolivar's *haciendas* at San Mateo.

Their idyl continued for eight months and then ended abruptly when his wife died of a sudden malignant fever. "This tragedy," he observed, "marked the end of my playtime, and the beginning of my work."

II

TO FORGET his grief, he returned to Madrid. Here he fell in with a group of South American intellectuals who, like himself, were dreaming dreams of freedom. They organized themselves into a secret society and accepted Bolivar as one of their leaders. Though of medium height, he produced the impression of commanding stature because of his well-proportioned muscles and his supple slenderness. His deep-set, dark and thoughtful eyes, his high, broad forehead, his long, thin, aristocratic face and his fiery voice demanded—and received—the respect of his fellows.

And aroused once more the suspicion of the Spanish court. A royal edict ordered him out of Madrid.

Again, as before, he went to Paris where he became the life of the fashionable *salons*. With his iogradiating smile he won the affection of practically all the French men and women of any importance—Talleyrand, General Duroc, Marshal Oudinot, Napoleon's young stepson Beauharnais, the great French actor François Talma, Madame Recamier and Madame de Staël. He became especially intimate with Alexander von Humboldt, the great German naturalist who was then visiting Paris. Humboldt had just returned from his scientific expedition to South America. "Do you think," Bolivar asked him one day, "that South America is ready for independence?"

"Yes," replied Humboldt, "I think it is. All that your country needs is a great leader."

Bolivar's heart leaped up when he heard these words. "A great leader." Perhaps he himself might prove to be the man. His old tutor, Rodriguez, had finally drifted to Paris with his *Émile* and his utopian dreams. "Of course you are to be the man!" But, first of all, Bolivar must complete his education. Rodriguez supplied him with those books that had served as a bugle call to freedom—Plato, Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Helvetius, Hobbes, Hume, Spinoza. And then, after the strengthening of Bolivar's mind, must come a further toughening of his body. "An end to your luxurious living!" A modest house. A hard mattress. A strict diet. A rigorous course in fencing until Bolivar became equally adept with either hand. And finally, Bolivar and Rodriguez started off on a walking tour over southern Europe. Down the valley of the Saône, across the Alps, and into the plains of Italy. Milan, Venice, Verona, Padua, Ferrara. At Naples, Bolivar was the guest of Humboldt's brother. At Alessandria, he saw Napoleon reviewing his army on the battlefield of Marengo. The "savior of the French Republic" was on his way to crown himself king of Italy. "What a mighty fall is this!" exclaimed Bolivar. Napoleon had degenerated from a demigod into a dictator.

Rome, and a visit to the Vatican. Here, to the amazement of the onlookers, Bolivar refused to kneel and to kiss the Pontiff's slipper. "I respect His Holiness, but I bow to no man."

One day the two pilgrims climbed the hill of Monte Sacro. The city below them was golden-red under the light of the setting sun. Rodriguez was delivering a stirring dissertation on the glory that was Rome. For a long time Bolivar was silent. And then, "his eyes moist, his breast palpitating, his face flushed with a feverish animation," he spoke:

"Rodriguez, I swear by the God of my forefathers that my hands shall never rest until they have delivered my country from the shackles of Spain!"

III

BOLIVAR returned to his country by way of the United States where he saw the spirit of independence in its practical application. When he arrived at his native city of Caracas, he found it in an uproar. A liberator had appeared in Venezuela—a strange fighter-prophet by the name of Miranda. This “soldier of misfortune,” like Bolívar a native of Venezuela, had fought in the American Revolution and in the French Revolution. He had distinguished himself under Napoleon and had attained the rank of general. And now he was back in South America in an effort to inspire a rebellion against the Spanish king. In the summer of 1811 he gathered together a number of Venezuelan patriots at Caracas, and on July 5 he issued a South American Declaration of Independence.

His next step was to establish this independence by force of arms. He took to the field and examined the troops. His heart sank. A rabble of undisciplined and barefoot peasants who could neither shoot nor drill. But he didn't give up. They were brave men, and with hard work they might be transformed into good soldiers.

Incessant drill under exacting taskmasters, the foremost of whom was Colonel Simon Bolivar. Irregular meals, irregular pay and nondescript rags in place of uniforms. But finally they were whipped into a fighting army. With this army of amateur soldiers Miranda twice defeated the troops of the Spanish king.

And then, treachery. A Venezuelan sentinel had delivered to the enemy the stronghold of Puerto Cabello. Miranda was giving a victory dinner to a hundred officers when he received the news of the betrayal. “Gentlemen,” he said, “Venezuela is wounded to the heart.”

The Spaniards were victorious. Miranda was captured and imprisoned at Cadiz where he died of a broken heart. The Venezuelan rebellion was at an end.

SIMON BOLIVAR

One of the leaders of the rebellion, however, had managed to make his escape from the Spaniards. Under cover of the night Bolivar had boarded a ship that sailed safely away from the fortress of Puerto Cabello. He returned to Caracas where, concealing himself in the hut of a friendly Indian, he laid the plans for another and more successful revolution.

IV

MIRANDA had failed because he couldn't perform the impossible. Bolivar succeeded because he could. His property had been confiscated, his army had melted away and twenty thousand Venezuelans had been swallowed up in an earthquake. "Nature herself is fighting against us!" wailed the survivors. "Very well," shouted Bolivar into the clamor. "Then we shall compel Nature, too, to give in to us!"

And he did compel Nature to give in to his indomitable will. Captured and exiled to the Island of Curaçao, he escaped and set sail westward and southward to New Granada—a country across the Andes from Venezuela. Here, in a land which he had never seen and in which his name had never been heard, he issued a manifesto of liberation and a call to arms. And the people, captivated by the magnetism of his personality, listened and obeyed. An army sprang up as if by magic. "Let us free Granada—and then, on to Venezuela!" With a company of two hundred men loaded upon ten rafts he poled up the Magdalena River to Tenerife, a stronghold occupied by a sizable Spanish force. He reached the stronghold in the dead of the night. Out of the darkness came the sentinel's call, "*Quién vive?*"

Bolivar fell upon the sentinel and cut his throat. Then, concealing his handful of soldiers behind the rocks and the trees, he ordered them to make a terrific clatter so as to convey an exaggerated impression of their numbers. The Spaniards thought that an entire army had descended upon them. Bolivar called upon their commander to give himself up. "If you refuse, I shall blow

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

the fortress to smithereens with my cannons!" The commander fled precipitately with his entire force, and Bolivar entered the town without the loss of a single man.

The townspeople looked with amazement at the soldier who had "routed an army by the mere sound of his voice." But where were his cannon? they wanted to know. "My cannon?" laughed Bolivar. "I didn't have any." And then, as he surveyed the arsenal that he had just captured, "But I see that we shall have plenty of arms for our future campaigns."

His next objective after Teneriffe was the fortress of Mompox, further up the river. Here, too, he was able to enter without a fight, for the Spaniards had fled at the word of his approach.

Higher and higher toward the source of the river he advanced, up amongst the cliffs of the Andes; and wherever his army encamped, hundreds of recruits rallied to his standard. The Spanish army "melted like the sands" before his onslaught. Within six days he fought six battles and won them all.

And then, an eastward and upward ascent into the peaks of the Andes toward his native Venezuela. "It is a feat beyond human endurance," his lieutenants warned him. "Then our endurance," he retorted, "must be *more* than human."

He started the crossing of the Andes in the middle of the winter. His soldiers, brought up in the tropical valleys of New Granada, were unaccustomed to the snowdrifts and the sleet-storms of the upper ranges. But into the teeth of the tempest they marched, scrambled up the faces of slippery rocks, held on precariously with their knees and their fingers, crawled in single file across ledges so narrow that two mules could not pass each other, and groped their way through the blinding mists that swirled around the mountaintops. Again and again, after an exhausting climb, they found it necessary to retrace their steps in order to avoid gorges too deep to cross. Hardly a day passed without the loss of men and animals who missed their footing and crashed down over the precipices as the mountains echoed their cries amidst the howling of the wind. "We shall never get across,"

moaned the living. But a fiery spirit drove them on. Bolivar seemed to be everywhere—smiling, tireless, undismayed, impervious to the cold, unconcerned about his life. "We have a mission to fulfill, and nothing shall stop us!"

And nothing *did* stop them. With five hundred crusaders he charged down from the Andes into Venezuela. The Spanish royalists looked upon them with superstitious amazement. "These soldiers are veritable devils!" To which Bolivar retorted—"Not devils, but avenging spirits!" He addressed his men as they reached the boundaries of his native land: "Soldiers, your arms have brought freedom to the gates of Venezuela . . . As the darkness scatters before the light of the dawn, the Spaniards will disappear at the mere sound of your guns . . . Brave soldiers, it is to your hands that America looks for salvation . . . You have conquered the Andes. It is now your proud task to conquer the Spanish king!"

V

THROUGH scenes of indescribable enthusiasm he marched across Venezuela toward his native city of Caracas. In every town and village he found eager volunteers for his army—not only South Americans but native Spaniards as well. For the resentment against the Spanish misrule was intense. One of Bolivar's Spanish volunteers, Major Vicente Elias, was so fanatical in his hatred of his countrymen that he vowed destruction to every last one of them. "When I have killed all the Spaniards I will do away with my own family and then with myself, so that none of that race will be left alive."

Major Elias had brought along with him an entire company of volunteers. Bolivar was now the commander of a considerable force, an army of inspired men determined to see but a single end to their crusade—victory. Reckless of their lives and regardless of the odds, they kept charging again and again at the enemy until they put them to flight. In one of their stubborn battles they renewed the charge twenty times, with Bolivar always gal-

loping at their head. He seemed to lead a charmed life. "God is preserving him for America's sake." His followers had become imbued with a religious conviction of their invincibility. "America is destined to be free!"

On August 6, 1813, they entered Caracas in triumph. The city lay in the hollow of the mountains like a huge bowl filled with flowers. Bolivar, in full dress uniform, marched at the head of the column amidst the garlands and the banners and the happy throngs that lined the streets. Shouts of acclamation on every side. The soldiers, ragged, barefoot, covered with wounds but with faces aglow, displayed the flags they had captured from the enemy.

They marched into the public square. Here, upon a raised platform, the notables of the city bestowed upon Bolivar the title by which he was henceforth to be known to his countrymen—*Libertador*—the Liberator of Venezuela.

VI

BOLIVAR had conquered his enemies. But he was unable to conquer his friends. Many of them had become envious of his success. They accused him of dictatorial ambitions. Several of his former lieutenants had set themselves up as dictators on their own account. They refused to acknowledge the authority of their Commander-in-Chief. Venezuela had become entangled in a confusion of civil wars. Street broils, mutinies, desertions. Bolivar tried to keep his people united by every psychological weapon at his command—flattery, persuasion, encouragement, reprehension, rewards, promises, threats, appeals to their self-interest, their patriotism, their common sense. Sometimes, when the occasion demanded, he resorted to *physical* weapons in order to rid his country of its malcontents. One day he ordered the execution of five hundred men. "If I am forced to retaliate by terrible means, which are repugnant to me, it is solely to deliver my country from its enemies."

SIMON BOLIVAR

Bolivar was not a cruel man. But he was obliged to fight fire with fire. His enemies, both Spanish and American, were the type that would stop at nothing. One of them, Morales, was always followed by a gigantic slave known as "the Executioner," a monster whose chief amusement was to clear his master's path of its "human vermin." Another of Bolivar's enemies, Zuazola, had adorned his hat with the ear of a slain rebel. Still another, Antonanzas, was in the habit of presenting his friends with boxes full of hands and feet and noses—the trophies of his battles. Such was the character of some of the men against whom Bolivar was obliged to fight.

But he fought against them and overthrew them, one by one. Time and again he came near to losing his life, either in open combat or as the result of treachery. One night he left his house to meet an Englishman sympathetic to the Venezuelan cause. During his absence an intimate friend came to visit him. Finding the house empty, the visitor lay down in Bolivar's hammock to await his return. When Bolivar came home, he saw his friend lying in a pool of blood, stabbed to the heart. Some enemy had mistaken this man for the Liberator.

This was but one of many seemingly miraculous escapes. The assassins never knew where or when to find him. "It's hard to shoot the shadow of an eagle on the wing," remarked his admiring friends.

And the "eagle on the wing" covered an amazing range of territory in his crusade to disemburden his country of its tyrants and its traitors. North, east, south, west—across unfordable rivers, insurmountable mountains and impenetrable forests he struck at the enemy with the swiftness of lightning. And with the tantalizing *irregularity* of lightning. His blows invariably descended upon the places where they were least expected. Everywhere he was hailed as a savior. The Liberator of Venezuela, New Granada, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Peru. "The Spanish domination in South America is now nothing but a memory."

VII

BY SEPTEMBER 4, 1826, Bolivar had completed his work of liberation. "Whatever remains of his life after that date," writes his great biographer, Rodo, "is tragedy." His campaigns had broken down his health. He suffered from recurrent attacks of fever. He saw the disintegration of the countries he had tried to unite. He tried to convene a Pan-American Congress in Panama, but failed in his attempt. "I am like the crazy Greek who stood on a rocky headland and tried to direct the vessels that sailed around it." The cross currents of personal envy and national intrigue were everywhere threatening to whirl his beloved countries into anarchy. He started on a personal tour of these countries. "Let there be no more regionalism—no more Venezuela, no more Ecuador or Bolivia or Chile or Peru. Let us all be united into a single family of Americans." Everywhere the people cheered these words and promised to heed them—and promptly forgot them the moment Bolivar was out of sight.

Rivalries, conspiracies, assassinations. In Bolivia there were three presidents, two of whom were killed, within a single week. Revolts in Ecuador, New Granada, Venezuela. Bolivar, too ill to take an active part in the suppression of the revolts, implored his countrymen to come to their senses. They voted him a pension of 30,000 pesos—to keep him quiet—and went on with their fighting. He refused the pension although he was now penniless, having sacrificed his entire fortune to the cause.

He was left virtually alone. Nearly all his friends had either died or deserted. Only a handful had remained loyal to him—his lieutenant Sucre, his old tutor Rodriguez, his Irish aide-de-camp O'Leary, his mistress Mansuela. He had met Mansuela in Quito, when he rode triumphantly into the city after his victorious Battle of Pichincha. She tossed him a flower from a balcony and a few days later she tossed him her heart. The wife of an English doctor in Quito, she left her husband to follow Bolivar

SIMON BOLIVAR

in his adventures. And she remained with him in his sorrow. Time and again her husband had begged her to return. But she always refused. "I am more honored by being the mistress of General Bolivar than the wife of any other living man."

Bolivar was her god, and she stood by him even after his crucifixion.

But Bolivar wanted to be alone in his sorrow. He had determined to exile himself from the painful scene of his military victories and his political defeats. Where would he go? It didn't matter. Anywhere away from the hatreds, the jealousies and the squabbles of his countrymen. He had brought freedom to a people who did not know how to use it. The Americans had won their war, and they had lost their peace. So much toil, so little gain! "Those of us who have served the Revolution have ploughed the sea."

Quietly he boarded a frigate and sailed away to his lonely death. The ship was bound for Jamaica; but when Bolivar's illness took a turn for the worse, the captain decided to sail for Santa Marta on the Colombian coast. They carried him to the shore on a litter—a shivering hundle of bones that had been the Liberator of South America.

He lingered on for a few days. "My last wish, as I die, is to see my countrymen united."

Twelve years after his death his wish came partially true. On a December day in 1842, a united fleet of all the nations he had liberated escorted his body home to his native city. Now at last they knew him for the great man that he was.

DISRAELI

Important Dates in Life of Disraeli

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1804—Born, December 21, in London. | 1848—Bought estate of Hughenden. |
| 1821—Apprenticed to firm of solicitors. | 1852—Appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. |
| 1825—Lost heavily in South American stock gamble. Started paper, <i>The Representative</i> . | 1861-65—Advocated British neutrality in American Civil War. |
| 1826—Published first novel, <i>Vivian Grey</i> . | 1868—Became Premier. |
| 1830—Left on trip to Orient. | 1869—Compelled to give up this office. |
| 1832—Ran for House of Commons as a radical. Defeated. | 1872—His wife died. |
| 1837—Elected to House of Commons as a Conservative. | 1874—Again appointed Premier. |
| 1839—Married Mrs. Wyndham Lewis. | 1876—Elected to peerage as Earl of Beaconsfield. Gave Victoria new title, Empress of India. |
| 1847—Acknowledged as leader of House of Commons. | 1878—Took prominent part in Treaty of Berlin. |
| | 1881—Died. |

Benjamin Disraeli

1804-1881



WHAT lies behind the inscrutable mask of the man they call the Sphinx? What tempests have so wracked the emaciated frame that, in audience before the Queen, tired lids droop over the once piercing eyes, and slightly he sways? So that the Queen, champion of conventions, violates the most rigid of them all, and bids him be seated in her presence. Deeply moved, he shakes his smiling sad face in denial and remains standing before his sovereign—her loyal servant to the last.

"Life is too short to be little," he wrote. Man of mystery, poet and statesman, builder of empires and weaver of dreams, he crowded a dozen lives into a single lifetime. "Poetry," he said, "is but the safety-valve of my emotions. I wish to put my writings into action."

Born in England (1804), he loves passionately all that is English. Combining the hot blood of Spain and of Italy, together with the poetry and the indomitable spirit of the Orient, he is at times almost consumed by the fires that rage within him. Yet he keeps himself in check under an overpowering will—a single unswerving desire to serve and to dominate the pale Nordics of his adoration.

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

A sheltered childhood, a haphazard schooling, a pair of gentle, affectionate, but utterly impractical parents. Hardly the ingredients for the making of a great man.

And then there was an additional handicap. Thrust young into an alien world, he was left to cope with a bewildering problem—his racial origin. No visible signs marked him apart, and yet he was an outsider, a Jew. Father Isaac, himself a follower of Voltaire, gave ground before the stronger grandfather, engaging a rabbi for extra-curricular studies and thus adding fuel to the fires of humiliation.

When grandfather Benjamin joined his Maker, Isaac yielded to family pressure and consented to his son's conversion to Christianity. Discarded the Hebrew lessons; and in their place, baptism and catechisms. Ben heaved a great sigh of relief.

At thirteen, he entered Dr. Cogan's school—at last, an English gentleman!

But now came a new surprise. Prayers and priests do not make an Englishman. The tall youth, olive-skinned, with jet curls and meticulous attire and alien manners, became the laughingstock of the other boys. He met their jeers with head upraised. "Some day I will be master over them."

And before long, he got his first opportunity for mastering his schoolmates. Directing and acting in plays of his own composition, he became the central figure of the social life in Dr. Cogan's school.

But play-acting was against the rules. The school's former leaders, disgruntled at the success of this "arrogant intruder," went to their master with tales of secret sessions. The Reverend Dr. Cogan denounced Disraeli in a scathing speech. "No doubt it is a foreign and seditious mind that has conceived such plans."

The glittering castle toppled, and Ben became the target of insulting jibes. "We've been led long enough by a foreigner!" cried a boy much bigger than Disraeli. To the amazement of the assembled scholars, Ben beat him with his fists. But this empty triumph held a bitter taste.

Mark this lesson well, Benjamin, for you will meet it all your life. "The foreigner, the usurper, the Jew."

School days thus ingloriously terminated at Dr. Cogan's suggestion, Ben came home.

II

TO A BEWILDERED BOY, the remote parents provided small help. It was to his sister Sarah that he turned. Together they discussed this strange handicap that birth had set upon them. For long hours she listened to the outpouring of his ambitions. Ben had recognized himself for a child of Destiny, and Sarah shared his conviction.

Deciding that education was the first step along the path to greatness, he attacked his father's library. With more zest than method, he devoured every volume within reach and filled notebook after notebook with his comments and conclusions. To Isaac the sight of the tall youth, wandering "aimlessly" about the house and uttering pompous judgments about everything under the sun, was a source of great irritation. "Pray, my dear boy," he scolded, "keep your papers in order."

Anxious to give direction to his boy's aimlessness, father Isaac suggested that he enter a lawyer's office. Ben loftily dismissed the suggestion. "The Bar. Pooh! To be a great lawyer, I must give up my chances of becoming a great man."

"Beware," Isaac warned, "of endeavoring to become great too soon."

Isaac argued, Ben scoffed. "Think," Isaac said, "of the opportunity this would give you for studying men." Finally Ben capitulated.

He entered the office of the solicitor, Mr. Maples, and began to survey the human scene. To shine amongst worldly men, one must be more worldly than the rest. Two characters in particular captivated his imagination—Lord Byron, master of wit, as pattern for literary style; Beau Brummell, master of insolence, as model for manner and attire. Never one to act halfway, Disraeli affected

a sartorial extravagance that would have startled Brummell himself.

A zestful, colorful, exciting life. Side by side with the stream of statesmen, bankers, hon vivants, flowed a stream of jingling coin—sweetest sound. His imagination flared up at the huge fortunes that were being made on a runaway market in South American mining stocks. Together with another young clerk, he gambled for a turn. As he watched the growth of his small stakes, a sense of self-sufficiency gripped him. Here was a world in which he might bring into play all his occult powers and analytical judgment.

His clerkship had begun to irk him. And so, at the suggestion of his father who recognized his restlessness, he took a trip to Germany. There, traveling down the Rhine beneath ivy-clad castles, he bade farewell to dull tomes and dusty desks. The wide world was too wonderful, and it was waiting.

His sortie into finance had brought him into contact with John Diston Powles, a controlling power in the market. Struck by the keenness of the young man's mind, Powles commissioned him to compile a pamphlet on South American mining. Disraeli's comparative ignorance of the subject disconcerted him not at all. In a few days the material was gathered, the pamphlet completed, and a publisher induced to print it. To Powles fell the doubtful pleasure of footing the bill.

During their conferences John Murray, the publisher, unwittingly delivered himself into Ben's hands. Fired by his brilliance, Murray confided his fondest dream—to start a daily paper. Ben grasped eagerly at the idea. Murray, a cautious man, attempted retraction, but found himself trapped in a landslide, the exuberant Ben leaping joyously into the lead.

Neither inexperience nor lack of capital could halt the young enthusiast. Ben arranged for everything. With Murray supplying half the funds, and Powles a quarter, only a fourth of the burden fell upon his own shoulders. A mere bagatelle to one whose operations on the stock market were proving his worth as a financier.

DISRAELI

It was decided that Lockhart, son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, was to be editor. To Scotland next, to make known to Lockhart his great good fortune. But a chill reception greeted him, Lockhart, having mistaken the signature for that of the elder Disraeli, looked askance at the intrusion of this youngster. An insult to his dignity! A situation to try a young man's mettle. Assuming a poise far beyond his years, and attributing his ideas to Murray, Ben waxed eloquent. Beneath his glib tongue the project became "the most considerable enterprise of the day." Still wary, Lockhart presented Disraeli to his illustrious father-in-law.

Here was reception more to his liking. Within baronial halls, Sir Walter received him graciously and at once espoused his cause. But with one proviso—a seat in Parliament for Lockhart. Just another bagatelle. Quickly and graciously Ben gave his promise—having not the slightest idea as to how he was going to fulfill it.

Onward plunges the avalanche. Even the doubting souls are carried along. Murray writes to Lockhart that never has he seen such promise in so young a man; that his discretion warrants any amount of confidence.

Back to London, with all in readiness, even to the waiting presses. And then the blow falls. Croker, powerful Secretary to the Admiralty, violently opposes the project. Prominent contributor to the *Quarterly*, another of Murray's publications, he demands to be told why all the scheming has taken place without his knowledge. And who is this young upstart of a Disraeli who dares such an undertaking without consulting him? Lashed by the vindictive tongue of Croker, Murray wilts. He places all the blame at Ben's door. "He alone is responsible for the divulging of the secret plans."

The avalanche has reached bottom; it crashes about Ben's feet. And almost simultaneously there comes another crash—in the stock market. Ben and his partner, young Evans, are wiped out. Their losses amount to 7,000 pounds.

Out of the double catastrophe Disraeli finds himself friendless

and alone. His late collaborators have deserted him in a body. Yesterday's backslappers, today they turn relentless hacks.

III

DISRAELI comes home. He finds comfort in his father's advice. Ridiculous at twenty-one to think that all's lost. Why, life is just beginning. Ben says nothing of the 7,000 pounds—nor of the debts he has accumulated in his effort to get rich.

Not long, however, can he dwell upon his debts. Benjamin, man of action, has met with reverses; but Benjamin, man of vision, stands ready to receive the torch.

Unknown to his family, he undertakes his first novel. Eager to justify himself to ears now closed, he fashions a hero in his own image. The story of Vivian Grey is the autobiography of Benjamin Disraeli. But it is more than that. Not content with the past, Disraeli projected his hero into the future, supplying him with all those qualities which analysis showed that he himself lacked. It was himself, of course, he meant when he wrote of Vivian Grey: "He had long come to the comfortable conclusion that it was impossible that his career could be anything but brilliant."

As in his writing, so now in his life, Disraeli found the exact type of character of whom he had need. Thus far, his fear of women had kept him apart from them. Yet his emotional spirit felt a great hunger for female companionship. Sarah had but partially satisfied this hunger. For the rest, he addressed his romantic yearnings to an imaginary creature, embodying within her all the gentle understanding, minus the physical demands, of incarnate womanhood. This creature of his imaginings materialized in the person of Mrs. Austen, neighbor of his parents, the first of many women whose platonic friendships were to play a leading part in his history.

Mrs. Austen was a great help to Disraeli. Sensing unusual depths of tenderness beneath the frivolous exterior, she courted his confidence. Overjoyed to lay aside the mountchank trappings,

Ben met honesty with candor. To her he revealed his hurts and fears, and finally the secret of his manuscript.

Mrs. Austen liked the story and found a publisher for it. The book was issued anonymously. A vigorous advertising campaign. London read, London laughed. Everybody recognized in this story not himself, but his neighbor, held up to ridicule. The book had a meteoric success; and the two chief conspirators, luxuriating under the shelter of Disraeli's anonymity, laughed like a couple of mischievous schoolchildren.

Another triumph, another fall. And once again it was that shadow that lurks in the pathway of the great—the little man—who struck at Disraeli. An indiscreet subordinate in the publishing house reveals the secret of the authorship. The acclamations of the public turn into threats. The impudence of this nobody who dares to sit in judgment over his betters! One critic wrote: "The class of the author was a little revealed by his frequent recurrence to topics about which the mere man of fashion knows nothing and cares less." And another referred to the "comic pretentiousness with which the author affects a distinction he does not possess." Murray, thinking he recognized himself in one of the unfavorable portraits, angrily severed all connections with the Disraeli family.

Ben's mind was in a turmoil. Could they be right, this furious rabble denouncing him as a fraud? Of a certainty, no! Only a great book could cause such furor. He would go on to become author of authors. Let the pack howl now; later they must come to heel.

Disraeli's health had given way under the stress of his emotions. The Austens, deeply concerned, persuaded him to accompany them to Venice. Gliding in gondolas over moonlit canals to the accompaniment of soft music, he recovered his spirits. But his body lagged behind. Home once more, he found work impossible because of torturing headaches.

Isaac, grown tired of London, had purchased a spacious home near Bradenham. Here, within lofty halls and sweeping grounds, Ben's love of grandeur found satisfaction. For months, discussing

his predicament with Sarah, he roamed the woods and fields. But this retirement, tonic for a time to a bruised spirit, made him finally restive. Even across these far fields, London sang her siren song of glories yet to come, and he must follow.

IV

HE HAD STUDIED MEN, but with the eye of youth. To this field he must now bring his maturer judgment. Having made the acquaintance of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, he became a frequent visitor at this man's home. Here foregathered the poetically and politically prominent. Into this gay circle stepped Disraeli, in attire more exaggerated than ever, but in manner and speech much subdued. His faithful notebook yields up his present formula for acquiring social success. "Do not talk too much . . . Never argue . . . Talk to women as much as you can . . . Nothing is of so much importance . . . as to be well criticized by women."

Charmed by the lavish entertainment of the fashionable world, Disraeli wrote and sold *The Young Duke*. But what does Ben know of dukes, inquires Isaac, bewildered. Sarah shrugs. What *doesn't* Ben know!

Disraeli knows everything, and he criticizes everything. Introduced into the House of Parliament, he finds fault even with the great orators of the day. A new world has now opened before his searching eyes. The pen is mightier than the sword; but how much mightier the silver tongue of oratory! Bewitched, he wanders through the corridors. What an enviable life! To stand before the elect, swaying them like saplings before a tempest of words. The telling phrase, the biting wit—until, wild with enthusiasm, they rise to drown all sound in thunderous applause. Sending the name of Disraeli ringing down through the centuries . . .

Watch out, Ben! Almost you collided with that hansom cab. That deafening sound is but the roaring traffic of a busy London street. And who are these little people that hurry past, unconscious of the prophet they are jostling in their midst? Unknown

DISRAELI

to them, one Benjamin Disraeli; but time will remedy that. First there must be travel—has not Byron himself set the pattern? And the world must have time to forget your failures.

To Spain, cradle of his ancestors; thence through Greece and Turkey; finally to Palestine. William Meredith, engaged to Sarah, is to join the tour. To their combined entreaties, Isaac yields; and in June, 1830, the pilgrimage begins. With some sadness, he bids farewell to Bradenham. And with some trepidation, he envisages his reception among the ultra English of the Empire's colonies. But—"adventures are to the adventurous." Your own words, Ben.

A gay rainbow trailing across the continent, the astounding wardrobe he exhibits. Through Turkey, where all that is eastern in him responds to the rhythm of the Orient. Ambition for the nonce is lulled, submerged in sensuous sound and smell.

Through Syria, an infinitude of burning sands, where no green thing can thrive. The majesty of such timeless austerity sounds deep chords within him.

At last, having shared with nomad tribes their tents and travels, he stands upon *The Mount of Olives*. Here, viewing the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre, he yields to a wave of religious ecstasy. A great peace enwraps him, fold upon comforting fold. For here, within these hallowed walls, lies the answer to the old bewildering question. We are all Christians, created in the image of our Christ.

Wandering through the dusty streets, he shaped the story that would carry this message to the world. *Alroy*, a young Jew who would free his race from worldwide prejudice.

On to Egypt, to join Meredith. Here tragedy cut short the journey. Meredith died of smallpox. Grieving over Sarah's grief, Ben lost all taste for travel and turned his face toward home.

Reaching Bradenham in October, somber amid falling leaves, he found Isaac half blind from constant reading and Sarah, broken by her bereavement, dedicating her life to him.

Travel has broadened Ben's vision, stilled much of his restless-

ness. Realizing that a literary career can never be enough, he turns undivided interest toward the political scene. Surveying the field for some foothold, he finds but a single means of entrance—through the drawing room. The Bulwers, the springboard from which to make the plunge.

V

FOLLOWING his pattern of speaking little and to the point, Disraeli acquires a reputation as a brilliant conversationalist with a store of colorful tales from the East. The formula for interesting the ladies bears fruit. Among the many women requesting to be presented to him are Mrs. Wyndham Lewis and Mrs. Caroline Norton.

Of Mrs. Lewis he wrote: “. . . a flirt, and a rattle . . .” Mrs. Norton he found, for the present, more satisfactory. Together with her mother and her sisters, she entertained him often in her home. Here, amongst the “noble and the fashionable,” delighted by the audacity of these people of birth, he felt at home. And drawing up an imaginary footstool he placed himself at the feet of these gentlefolk—a self-styled page boy, ready to absorb and adore.

This gay social whirl, however, is but the means to an end. It is the men of action whose opinion he really courts. Slowly, and because their women are favorably impressed, they accept him. At last the long coveted goal is reached. Ben is invited to small political luncheons. At times grave doubts assail him. Seated next to Sir Robert Peel and to others whose birth has bestowed upon them all that he himself must struggle ceaselessly to attain, he wonders whether the end is worthy of the means. Is it really essential to enter Parliament? Can it be that gracious living has tamed his flaming spirit, he asks himself as homeward bound from some frivolous evening he contemplates a life complete in social dalliance. He feels that now it is only pride that drives him on. Or is this but a breathing spell, a lull before the storm?

It must be the latter. For a gathering storm bursts. In 1832 the reform bill is passed; all England is in upheaval. Responding to the trumpet call of opportunity, Ben rushes to Bradenham to enter the mêlée as independent candidate. Defeated at the elections, he is not discouraged. Leaping upon the carved figure of a lion, he has delivered an impromptu oration to an electrified audience. And having tasted of this heady potion, he needs must drink more deeply thereof.

Back to the drawing rooms of London, for more campaigning.

Ben has acquired a mistress. In her company he mingles with the sporting crowd, setting himself the task of becoming a fine horseman. This he accomplishes without pleasure but with satisfaction. The blond Anglo-Saxon giants, followers of the hounds, fascinate him. "The magnificent asses," he calls them. The epithet contains no rancor, but rather admiration and a little envy. In honor of his paramour, he writes and publishes a novel, *Henrietta Temple*.

But these side journeys are unimportant. The things that count are the contacts with great men—such as those made in the home of Lady Blessington. "I am dying for action, and rust like a Damascus saber in the sheath of a poltroon," he tells her. How he envies these men, with power to translate words into action! If only he could get their help.

And help did come to him in the person of Lord Melbourne, who was attracted by his originality. Melbourne's question as to what Ben wanted to be, had drawn a prompt reply, "I want to be Prime Minister." "No chance of that in our time," Melbourne had told him. "Go into politics . . . With patience I dare say you will do very well . . . But put all these foolish ideas out of your head."

Lord Melbourne, you know not whereof you speak. No idea of patience has ever entered that curly head. Chafing beneath enforced inaction, he cries in answer to a query as to what would constitute a desirable life—"A continued grand procession from manhood to the tomb."

VI

DISRAELI is still clinging to the idea of independent candidacy. But the public has no admiration for such apparent lack of fealty. A politician must have a party's backing. But which party? Although the chances for an unknown are better with the Whigs, Ben's sympathies lean with the Tories. And with the Tories, under the leadership of Robert Peel, he takes oath.

For yet awhile, fate turns an immobile cheek. But we are on the eve of swift events. Victoria, a girl of eighteen, ascends the throne. With Victoria's accession comes the dissolution of Parliament. Safe now within the party fold, Disraeli receives many offers of constituency. Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, whom he has learned to respect and admire, steps forward. Through her husband, she holds out to Disraeli a fellow constituency at Maidenstone. Having dropped into his lap this political plum she proceeds, with all the energy and good sense at her command, to campaign by his side. "When I meet you again," Disraeli promises his electors, "not a person will look upon me without some degree of satisfaction . . . and many of you perhaps with some degree of pride."

The voting over, Wyndham and Disraeli are in. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P. At Bradenham, awaiting the opening of Parliament, he contemplates his triumph—and his responsibility. Owing to the harassed history of his people, he loves England's solidity more than the English themselves love it. For to them their heritage is a matter of course. There, beneath the templed trees of his father's estate, he dedicates himself to the service of his country. To keep England noble, undivided and great.

In Parliament now. Seated behind Sir Robert, he listens to the speakers, dreaming of the day when he is to deliver his own first address. He is quite unaware of the sidelong glances that mistrust him. These stolid men resent the un-English-looking interloper thrust into their most British midst.

The great day dawns. Benjamin arises to make real his cher-

DISRAELI

ished dream. But the dream turns out to be a nightmare. His star seems destined never to ascend the heavens in a gentle curve. His opening words bring titters, which gradually expand into a crescendo of laughter. Cries of "Hear, hear" and "Question, please" interrupt every sentence. Valiantly he struggles against the rising tide of derision. At first squeaky of voice and slightly nervous, he finally grows calm and sure of himself. But the contest proves unequal. He faces his tormentors and sends a challenge ringing through the hall: "Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me!"

To continued laughter, he resumes his seat with bowed head. Another dismal failure added to the growing list.

There is a glimmer of comfort, however—the supporting voice of his chief, Sir Robert Peel. To Disraeli's comment that his effort had been "a reverse," Sir Robert's retort is: "I say anything but reverse; you will make your way."

Lift that heavy head, Benjamin. Others of your loyal friends are with you. Listen to the famous Sheil, as he berates your detractors: "I tell you, if ever the spirit of oratory was in a man, it is in that man. Nothing can prevent him from becoming one of the first speakers of the House of Commons."

A fig for dull orderly beginnings! What seemed the sword-thrust of defeat was but the birth-pang of glory. The voice of genius had spoken. Soon it would have for an audience—the entire world.

VII

SLOWLY his star rises, and steadily. True, there are setbacks still; but no career is complete without its strengthening obstacles. Six months after Disraeli's entry into Parliament, death claimed his colleague, Lewis. Hastening to console the widow, he remained to admire. Attracted by her warmth and steadfastness, he grew to recognize her as the woman necessary to complete his life. In answer to his marriage proposal, Mary Anne Lewis asked a year in which to study his character.

Bringing to his courtship that ardor typical of his every venture, he wrote to her continuously and without restraint. "I wish to be with you, to live with you, never to be away from you." But once again he seemed headed for failure. Mary Anne's answers became less and less frequent until finally there was only silence.

In great alarm, Benjamin begged for an interview. Mary Anne received him coldly. Rosina Bulwer had convinced her that it was her small income, and not herself, that Disraeli was after. How else could it be, since she was forty-five, and he but a little over thirty? Dismissed and desolate, he penned a final letter. ". . . As far as worldly interests are concerned, your alliance could not benefit me . . . Farewell . . . The time will come when you will sigh for any heart that could be fond . . . and then you will recall to your memory the passionate heart that you forfeited, and the genius that you betrayed."

This proved too much for Mary Anne. She melted utterly. "For God's sake, come to me," she wrote, "I am ill and almost distracted. I am devoted to you."

At St. Peter's, in Hanover Square, they were married (August, 1839). To say that the marriage was perfect may draw smiles from the sophisticates, but so it was. Mary Anne's good nature and unquestioning devotion never wavered. On his part, Benjamin was the most devoted and appreciative of husbands. Her tactless honesty, which irritated many another, delighted him, and her constant chatter soothed him. Adoring till the very end, he turned always to her as the one rock in a weary land.

VIII

IN HER YOUTH, Victoria had disliked Disraeli's patron, the austere Sir Robert Peel. Now, married to Albert Saxe-Coburg, a man who thoroughly approved of Sir Robert, the mature Queen had grown to trust him. At last the scene arranges itself for the climax. Disraeli is ready to advance the long step toward his goal. His name is on the lists of those proposed for ministerial posts.



Simon Bolivar



Disraeli

DISRAELI

But once again Destiny shakes her head. No, Benjamin, not yet. One by one the posts are filled, and no summons has come to Disraeli.

Perplexed, both Mary Anne and Benjamin address notes to Sir Robert—and receive cool answers. Sir Robert's actions, however, are not of his own choosing. It is the old distrust of the foreigner, and Peel is helpless against the pressure of opinion.

When the next Parliament met, Benjamin's position was most unenviable. A conservative without a post, with nothing to do but to cast his vote. Loyally he took his place, the object of surprised glances, and gracefully he did his part.

This inactivity, so irksome to a strong man, could not long endure. Seeing for the present no roads open, he said to Mary Anne: "This is the time to imitate Talleyrand who, when he could not see very clearly what ought to be done, took to his bed."

Instead of taking to his bed, however, he betook himself, together with his wife, to Paris for a winter of gaiety punctuated by frequent entertainments in the palace of the French king and queen.

That winter in Paris there came to him the representatives of a group of young men. Impatient with the old political forms, they wished to form an opposition party. Disraeli appealed to them as the logical leader.

He listens, and lays his plans. In England once again, they set in motion the wheels that will roll out the old, roll in the new. Eventually, the once indomitable Peel is overthrown. Disraeli is now riding upon the crest of a tidal wave!

IX

SUCCESS has given him renewed assurance. Soberer now his manner and attire; his speech, less fiery, more devastating. Yet still the public refuses to take him to its heart. Though he no longer struts before them as the flashy mountebank, they love this new Disraeli no better. They find in him now a little of the sinister,

much of the mysterious. Albert and Victoria view with alarm his growing popularity among the younger generation. They resent, too, the blows he has dealt their devoted friend, Peel.

Faster now the march of events. Isaac is dead. Benjamin purchases Hughenden Manor, installing Mary Anne as its Lady. Benjamin is Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Queen having accepted him on Stanley's recommendation. "I was not born Chancellor of the Exchequer," he says. "I am one of the Parliamentary rabble."

And now, another turn of events. Disraeli is ousted as Chancellor, with Gladstone leading the attack.

Time passes now too rapidly for Disraeli. He is fifty-five! The once lithe figure is grown gaunt; the once aesthetic face, thin almost to emaciation. "Dizzy" is beginning to show the strain. Ugly, many think him. But to Mary Anne he is still the dreamy poet of their courting days. "He is very handsome," she declares. "I should like them to see him when he is asleep."

Old friends are disappearing, new friends take their place. His beloved Sarah is gone. Albert, too, is dead; and Victoria, powerful and determined monarch, has learned to trust him. She treats him with kindness, even. New friends, new honors. At Oxford he receives a doctor's degree. Never since Wellington has a public figure been accorded such an ovation.

Faster, faster. The Victorian Age is in full swing. The Industrial Era. Machines, inventions, speculations, adventures, plans—and Disraeli keeping abreast of them all.

But now the years are beginning to slow him. Sixty-one, and the body lags behind the spirit. Seated in the pew at Hughenden, he still dreams of being Prime Minister. Many now share that dream, for England has at last accepted the inevitable. She cannot love this man, but she respects and trusts him.

Factories and mills bring people together, and they talk. The day of articulation for the workingman is dawning. Rioting and demonstrations. The workers demand a voice in Parliament. Against Gladstone and terrific odds, Disraeli puts through a bill

granting more general suffrage. The man is a wizard. What next? How taciturn he has grown! Almost never laughs. Only Mary Anne and his intimates know the warm simplicity that dwells within this man called the Sphinx.

Eighteen-sixty-eight, year of years. Lord Derby retires, the inevitable is at hand. Victoria summons Disraeli to Osborne. Without surprise he receives the message, for Victoria herself has told him she intends to make him her Prime Minister. But with what pounding pulse he reads the note! And who would give scorn to a few tears, wrung from eyes which for so long have gazed on triumph from afar and now view it in a lean and trembling palm.

"You must kiss hands," Victoria declares upon receiving him. And falling on his knees, he kisses the soft small hand in real devotion. For actually he loves this woman. Within him well great floods of emotion. With every fiber of his being, he vows to serve faithfully his little Queen. What a pair they make, this tall lean Eagle, and this small plump Pigeon!

To a reception in his honor flock the great. Mary Anne, on the arm of the Prince of Wales, presides graciously. If she leans a little heavily, now and then, there is a reason. For some time past she has been suffering from cancer; but not Mary Anne to burden her hero when now, more than ever, he needs his every faculty.

One other shadow hovers over the brilliant assembly. Sarah's absence. Turning aside a moment in his hour of triumph, Benjamin sends his thoughts to her whose faith in him not once had wavered.

X

NOT YET is Disraeli to bring to public life the full powers of his genius. At Hughenden, tortured by asthma and rheumatic pains, he receives news of his overwhelming defeat. Weighed down by infirmities, he contemplates retirement. But it is not in his nature to abandon a defeated party. Following precedent, the Queen offers a peerage. For himself he refuses, but for his wife he asks

a title. Mary Anne becomes Viscountess of Beaconsfield, while her illustrious husband remains plain Dizzy.

This honor, come so late, sits on the shoulders of a strange pair. She eighty-one, and he sixty-eight, both very ill. Mostly they are bedridden. Short periods of health permitting, they take their place in society. A startling sight. Mary Anne, an overdressed mummy. Benjamin, with one remaining curl dyed black, an alien with the features of a hawk.

At last, unable to take nourishment—for the cancer was of the stomach—Mary Anne died. Disraeli's overwhelming grief drew sympathy even from his enemies. Gladstone himself wrote a warm and friendly letter.

With Mary Anne's going, life changed completely for the widower. The house passed to her heirs, and Disraeli removed himself to a hotel. "This," said everybody, "is the end of his career."

And then, contrary to all expectations, he came with new vigor back into the political arena. Seeking surcease from the hollow pain.

Victoria welcomed the return. For Gladstone she had little fondness; for his policies, still less. With satisfaction she viewed the events leading to his downfall. Watched happily Disraeli's deft manipulations and certain victory. Now at last (1874) they were re-united in power and in friendship—this amazing pair who could see so surely eye to eye, whose devotion to Empire superseded all else, who in honesty and in steadfastness met on common ground.

Bringing now to Victoria's service the ardor of an undivided purpose, Disraeli lays at her feet prize after prize. The Wizard waves his wand (1875): the Suez Canal is an accomplished fact. Greater glory to the Empire! Once more he works his magic (1876): Victoria becomes Empress of India. Greater grandeur to the Crown! In reciprocity, she wields her scepter—and behold, Disraeli is Lord Beaconsfield. He is leader of the House of Lords.

Seventy-four now. And though the will and the spirit soar on

DISRAËLI

high, the years have taken their toll of the flesh. More frequently illness absents him from the House. Always the Queen sends flowers from her own gardens. Often he speaks to her of retirement, but she will have none of it. A sick eagle is still an eagle, and no pigeon can wing the dizzying heights alone.

There is much work to be done; he rallies. Turkey, Russia, the Balkans—a smoking volcano about to erupt. Russia threatens to seize all the Mediterranean ports. The Queen urges action, fuming at these men who procrastinate. Calmly Disraeli counsels patience. "We will have peace if we are firm," he promises.

Seated next to him at dinner, one of the Princesses exclaims, "I cannot imagine what you are waiting for." "Potatoes, at this moment, Madam," he answers quietly.

Inch by inch, Russia yields in the territorial card game, but not finally until the news breaks about the secret landing of Indian troops. All this victory without a single blow, or the loss of a single Englishman. He is still the master magician. But how tired he is! He longs for release, but he cannot face her Majesty's scenes.

XI

To BERLIN, for the signing of the treaty granting all his demands. How he must have chuckled on the way! In youth, adventures to the adventurous; in age, victory to the audacious. Audacity he needed, for here he found the cards cunningly stacked against him. Russia agreed to non-aggression in Turkey; but Turkey was not to defend her borders against occupied Bulgaria. A direct negation of the London treaty. Gortchakoff and Beaconsfield lock arms; the battle is on. To Gortchakoff's thundering, Beaconsfield replies quietly that England's terms constitute an ultimatum. The Russians send an emissary to their Emperor; the Congress is at a standstill. To the Queen he writes, "I have no fear of the result . . ."

The expiration date of the ultimatum. With calm deliberation the gambler plays his last card. He orders a special train to carry

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

him and his entourage to Calais. The winning band! Results are swift. Bismarck calls, offering compromise. "Compromise," retorts Disraeli, "was found at the moment of the London agreements, and it is impossible to go back on those." They stand facing each other—the stout blunt Teuton and the lean suave Jew. Bismarck hastens to the Emperor, having first asked Beaconsfield to dine. Of this interview Disraeli writes Victoria: ". . . he (Bismarck) was convinced that the ultimatum was not a sham, and before I went to bed, I had the satisfaction of knowing that St. Petersburg had surrendered."

Bismarck's high regard for Beaconsfield advances to admiration. "The Old Jew," he declares, "*that is a Man!*"

Never was the Wizard's popularity so great. All England adores its Dizzy, who has done it again . . .

Another short day of triumph—and then the clouds gather once more on the horizon. Trouble in India, uprisings in South Africa, threatened famine at home. And always Gladstone waging verbal warfare against "the heretic and his mad policies." Differences arise between Disraeli and the Faery Queen.

But the Wizard has not lost his magic touch. The Queen is pacified; elsewhere, too, quiet is restored. Only on the home front do the doves of peace decline to perch. The threat of famine grows more serious, as rains pour continuously from leaden skies. Slushing through the mud at Hugbenden, he receives devastating news. A mission to Rabul has been slaughtered to a man.

And then the elections. The conservative party sinks in crushing defeat. To Gladstone, grown fanatic in his denunciation of "the instrument of the devil," this conclusion is but pre-ordained.

Defeat brings to Beaconsfield what he has desired above all else—relief. His mind has turned once more to letters and the arts. True, he will miss the stimulating conferences with the Queen. But the sands are running low, and the body cries for rest.

Deeply touching, the final scene between the two. The Queen bestows upon him a statuette of herself in bronze. For the last time he kisses the small plump hand, promising to write often.

Several letters he does write—and then the Eagle and the Pigeon settle down in their separate nests . . .

XII

HUGHENDEN receives its master, home at last. The few who visit him are startled by the almost lifeless figure. A mass of skin and bones, the one lacquered curl resting ridiculously on the parchment forehead. Only now and then one eyelid flutters upward, when some pointed phrase strikes home. The mind has not lost its keenness, nor the tongue its edge. Yet speech is possible only at intervals, when drugs have given him momentarily his failing breath. "Dreams . . . dreams," he murmurs, poking at a dying fire.

Along the stairway hang portraits of the many people he has loved so well. "The gallery of friendship," he calls it.

Several visits, against his physician's orders, to the House of Lords. He delivers a number of addresses to his former colleagues speaking with eloquence but with great difficulty.

Back home. A chill confines him to his bed. The Queen's own physician promises hope, but Disraeli knows better. "I should prefer to live, but I am not afraid to die." In the midst of his final agonies, he corrects proofs for a speech. "I will not go down to posterity talking bad grammar."

Two o'clock in the morning. Slowly the dying man rises and, throwing back his head, prepares to speak. The old familiar gesture. Then he falls back. April 19, 1881. Benjamin Disraeli has embarked upon his last adventure.

Unable to attend the funeral, the Queen afterwards trod afoot the pathway taken by the procession. She wanted to stand alone before the grave of a dear friend. In the church she caused to be erected a monument to his memory. The inscription ended in this revelatory passage: "Kings love him who speaketh right."

GARIBALDI

Important Dates in Life of Garibaldi

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1807—Born, July 4, at Nice. | 1860—Liberated Sicily from the king of Naples. |
| 1834—Condemned to death as revolutionist.
Escaped to Marseilles. | 1862—Fought again for liberation of Rome and a united Italy. |
| 1836—Arrived in South America. | 1870—Helped French Republic in war against Germany. |
| 1836-46—Liberated Rio Grande and Uruguay. | 1875—Became member of parliament in Rome. |
| 1848—Returned to Italy. | 1882—Died June 2. |
| 1848-49—Fought for the liberation of Rome. | |

Giuseppe Garibaldi

1807-1882



THERE HAVE BEEN many heroic soldiers of fortune. Garibaldi, one of the outstanding heroes of all time, was a soldier of *misfortune*. And through his own choice. He always sought out the most unprofitable causes to fight for. Always he took up arms for the oppressed and the dispossessed. Wherever there was a nation to be liberated, whether in the Old World or in the New, Garibaldi was to be found at the head of the liberating forces. And in return for his services he asked for no glory or reward. In 1842, when he had won a series of victories for Uruguay, he was living, with his wife in a tumbledown hut with no door and with broken windows. One night the leader of a French squadron in South America, Admiral Lainé, came to congratulate him on his success. The hut was plunged in darkness.

"Does General Garibaldi live here?"

When Garibaldi heard his name called, he turned to his wife, "Anita, bring a light!"

"Sorry," said Anita, "there's no light to bring."

"Oh, I forgot," apologized Garibaldi. "Candles have not been included in our military rations."

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

"And so," wrote the Admiral, "I heard Garibaldi's golden voice, but I was unable to see Garibaldi's golden smile."

II

THAT GOLDEN SMILE of Garibaldi's was famous the world over. In appearance he was a combination of Mars and Apollo. There was strength in his body and beauty in his face. Tall, lithe, muscular, with a halo of gold-brown hair and a gold-brown beard, he was like a painting of Michelangelo's. A god in a red blouse and patched-up trousers.

It was a curious circumstance that impelled Garibaldi and his "legion of liberation" to adopt the red blouse for a uniform. Finding it necessary, because of the lack of funds, to clothe his soldiers as economically as possible, Garibaldi had made an offer for a consignment of red woolen shirts that a merchant in Montevideo was about to send to a slaughter house in Buenos Aires. "The red color," explained the merchant, "will help to absorb the blood in the shambles."

"And on the battlefield, too. Just the thing for us!"

And thus the red shirt became the symbol of Garibaldi's fight for freedom.

III

THE SON of a sea-captain, Garibaldi was born (at Nice) with two strong instincts in his blood: a love for wild wide spaces, and a passion for freedom. His favorite amusements as a child were roaming over the hills and swimming in the sea. "I seem," he once remarked to Alexandre Dumas, "to have been born amphibious."

And fearless. Strolling one day along a riverbank, he chanced upon a group of women washing flax. One of the women lost her footing and fell into the water. Treacherous water, full of cross currents and whirlpools. Garibaldi leaped in after her and pulled her ashore.

GARIBALDI

It would have been an act of unusual courage for a full-grown man. Garibaldi at the time was only eight years old.

At fifteen he left school—"the freedom of the open appealed to me more than the confinement of the classroom"—and sailed off by himself to Genoa in search of adventure. This was a great blow to his father, who had intended Giuseppe for the priesthood. "The peace of the cloister for my son; I have had enough hurricanes for the two of us." But he realized now that his son was not made for peace. He bowed to the inevitable and hired "Peppino" as cabin boy on his own ship.

Peppino—nickname for Giuseppe—became a favorite with the sailors. Though easily their master at trawling for oysters and swimming through the surf, he yet aroused no envy on their part. His blue eyes had such a friendly warmth in their depths. And his voice, whether in speech or in song, vibrated with such an understanding sympathy.

And he knew so much more than they did. His schooling, to be sure, was no better than their own; but he had read ever so many more books. History, philosophy, poetry. Especially poetry. How pleasant to while away the silent hours of the night listening to that golden voice as it recited the poems of Foscolo or Dante or Voltaire. Or sang the songs of the French revolutionists. Stirring words—he translated them; inspiring music—the music of rebellion needed no translating.

Ten years of singing and sailing and toiling—his hands were as busy as his brain—and Garibaldi had risen from cabin boy to captain. A dangerous career, commanding a ship in the early nineteenth century. He cruised to the Levant, where Turks and Greeks were locked in a struggle to the death; he fought against pirates, who attacked his ship with axes and long knives; he sailed over the seas made famous in Byron's heroic verse. Perils, adventures, aspirations. Battles for freedom. With Byron he came to believe that it was "better to die as a free man than to live as a slave."

And then, word reached him of an Italian who had dared to

die for freedom. *Ciro Menotti*. This man had tried to unite his disunited country, and to unshackle it from its Austrian bonds. The Austrians had captured and killed him.

But they were unable to kill his spirit of revolt. The spark engendered by *Menotti* had been fanned into a flame in many an Italian heart. *Garibaldi* met one of these followers of *Menotti*—a young Genoese named *Cunco*. "Hundreds of our men have been executed," *Cunco* informed him. "But the best man of us all is still alive. *Mazzini*. You ought to meet him some day. This man is like the firebrand of God sent down to avenge our wrongs."

Garibaldi sailed for Marseilles where he met *Mazzini*, exiled but unbowed. "Columbus was not so happy at the discovery of America," wrote *Garibaldi* of this meeting, "as I was at the discovery of the redeemer who was to lead our people to the promised land."

The acquaintance between *Mazzini* and *Garibaldi* ripened into a lifelong collaboration for freedom. *Mazzini*, the dreamer of the great dream; *Garibaldi*, the translator of the dream into even greater deeds.

IV

AT THE OUTSET, the liberation of Italy seemed a hopeless task. As a result of the *Unholy Alliance* of 1815, Italy lay dismembered like a bleeding corpse. Piedmont and Sardinia had been parceled off to the House of Savoy. Lombardy and Venetia had been reduced to the status of Austrian provinces. Tuscany, Modena, and Parma had been crushed under the heel of the Austrian Grand Dukes. Rome, Umbria, and Romagna had succumbed to the papal rule, supported by a French army. Naples and Sicily had been cast to the untender mercies of the Bourbons. "Italy in 1815," remarked the sardonic *Metternich*, Father of the *Unholy Alliance*, "is no longer a nation; it is merely a geographical name."

To transform a lifeless name into a living nation, this was the job of the two inspired young men. *Garibaldi* threw himself heart

GARIBALDI

and soul into this job. Assuming the name of *Borel*, he tried to organize a rebellion among the sailors of the Genoese royal fleet. Betrayed by a treacherous "fellow rebel," he escaped to Marseilles, there to find his name printed on a number of circulars. The Piedmontese government had set a price on his head.

No time to tarry in Italy. But across the Atlantic, in South America, there were other revolutions to be fought, other tyrannies to be overthrown.

He sailed, together with a company of devoted followers, to South America. There, for twelve years (1836-1848), he led his guerrilla band of consecrated Redshirts to the emancipation of two countries, Rio Grande and Uruguay.

Stranger than a tale out of the Arabian Nights, this South American adventure of Garibaldi's. At first he set out as a buccancer, a Robin Hood of the Sea, against "the enemies of freedom and the oppressors of their fellow men." But after a few months of sea roving he gave up the boat for the saddle. See him now galloping at the head of his troops over the pampas. His handful of Italians have been joined by a group of South American *gauchos*. The best riders in the world, these centaurs of the Rio Grande seem to be as one with their horses. Strange mythical creatures, half men and half beasts, flying over the fields and brandishing a lance in the one hand and a lasso in the other.

Before many months, Garibaldi had become the most expert of them all. A wild leader of a wild band, harassing the enemy, striking with the suddenness of a thunderbolt, driving their cattle along with them for food, killing what they needed and roasting it over their campfires, submitting to torture when captured without a groan, and dying on the battlefield with laughter on their lips.

And they died in great numbers, always to be replaced by still greater numbers. For they were drawn as by a magnet to that miracle of a leader. Nothing seemed able to hurt or to stop him. Once he was captured by an enemy officer. In an effort to draw some information from him, his captor had him whipped and

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

then suspended by his thumbs for two hours in his cell. "It was an agony not to be described," wrote Garibaldi. Yet not a word escaped from his lips.

An amazing fighter. And an amazing lover. One day in 1839, having left the saddle for a while to take command of a ship, he was examining the shore through a spyglass. "By chance I cast my eyes . . . upon a high hill . . . where a few simple and picturesque houses were visible. Outside of one of these . . . I espied a young woman, and forthwith gave orders for the boat to be got out, as I wished to go ashore. I landed . . . and, making for the houses where I expected to find this young woman, I had just given up hope of seeing her again when . . . an acquaintance invited me to take coffee in his house. We entered, and the first person who met my eyes was the damsel who had attracted me ashore . . . We both remained enraptured and gazed on each other in silence . . . At last I greeted her by saying 'Tu devi esser mia' (You ought to be mine)."

And his she became. Her name was Anita Ribera. Though but eighteen years old, she defied her father's objections—he had plighted her to another man—and surrendered herself to the "magnetic insolence" of her country's liberator. That night she met him on shipboard, and they sailed away together to a union of great happiness, many hardships and—as we shall see—final tragedy. Together they "ploughed the seas and galloped over the pampas," fighting side by side and protecting each other from the enemy's blows. In one of the battles she was taken captive. Believing that Garibaldi had fallen in that battle, she received permission to search for his body. Accompanied by an escort of two enemy soldiers, she walked amidst her slain comrades and turned the face of every one of them toward the light. Finally she eluded her guards, leaped upon a horse she had secured from a peasant, and vanished into the tropical forest.

Four days of galloping through the jungle and swimming rapid rivers, with no food and with hardly a moment's rest—and then she found Garibaldi.

GARIBALDI

And gave birth to a child. They named it Menotti, after the hero of the first Italian revolution.

V

GARIBALDI was a man's man. And a ladies' man. Always susceptible to new pastures, new enticements. Yet at all times he was devoted, if not at all times faithful, to Anita. Once, to appease her jealousy, he clipped his gold-brown hair to the roots. "Now, for a while, the women will stop running after me."

A shorn Samson. But, unlike Samson, still possessed of his strength to fight the Philistines. Having finished his work in South America, he returned to Italy. Great enthusiasm at his arrival. The fires of rebellion had been kept alive during his absence. "And now, to fan them into a devastating flame!"

He gathered his forces—a mere bandful—and marched upon Rome, to rid that city of its French army. One thousand against thirty thousand. "Only a miracle can save his men from being chewed up and spewed out by the French."

And the miracle happened. By a series of bold maneuvers—"one never knows just where or how he will strike next"—the "Tiger of Montevideo" routed the army of General Oudinot. He declared Rome (1849) a free Republic—a government "without prisons, without trials, without violence."

A perfect Utopia, of all-too-brief duration. New forces were gathering against it on all sides. New tactics, and new treachery. General Oudinot proclaimed a truce; and then, relying upon the "simple naïveté" of Garibaldi, made a surprise attack before the truce was over.

The treachery worked. Garibaldi's Roman garrison was massacred; but Garibaldi, with a bullet wound in his side, managed to escape. Anita, once more with child, escaped along with him. And also with him went the broken remnant of his army. "Let those who wish to continue the war against the stranger come with me. I offer neither pay nor quarters nor provisions. I offer

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles, and death. Let him who loves his country in his heart, and not with his lips, follow me."

A battered, bedraggled, hunger-driven and hunted little band. But a great inspiration drove them on—the courage of their wounded leader and his stricken wife. He implored her to remain behind—"the enemy will do no violence to a woman in your plight"—but she was determined to share her husband's perils. "At the first house we came to," wrote Garibaldi, "having asked a woman to cut off her hair, she put on men's clothing and mounted a horse."

An epic retreat. Hiding by day and marching by night, they eluded the pursuing enemy whose numbers had now been increased to seventy-five thousand. Time and again they seemed to be surrounded, only to escape from the net when it was about to be drawn. Always Garibaldi had the uncanny intuition to march along the one path left unguarded by the enemy.

And always he was driven on by an undying hope. But a great grief had now come to distract that hope. The dangerous illness of his wife. When finally the little band had reached the coast town of Cesenatico—"beyond lie the boats that will carry us to freedom"—Anita was on the verge of death.

They boarded the boats and sailed away. No food, no water. A full moon—"lovelier than I had ever seen her before"—overhead; a woman with fever-parched lips underneath. "No matter what happens to me, Giuseppe, go on with your work."

An attack by the enemy fleet. All of Garibaldi's boats were captured, with the exception of three. In one of these three boats sat Garibaldi, with the dying Anita in his arms.

Daybreak, and a deserted coast near Ravenna. Garibaldi carried his wife ashore; and there, on a sand dune, he saw the death-look in her face. "I felt her wrist—there was no pulse."

He dug a grave for Anita on the seashore, and went on.

GARIBALDI

VI

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, Garibaldi had but a single motto—*Avanti* (Forward). He tried for a while to settle in the United States, where he worked in a candle factory. He then took command of a ship that sailed to the Orient. "Enough of adventuring, Giuseppe. Return to Italy and retire. You are getting old."

To Caprera, a small island off Sardinia, he went. There he bought a hut where he felt resigned to end his days in quiet solitude.

But the cry of the oppressed reached him across the waters, and once more he felt the old restlessness in his heart. Italy, under the political inspiration of Cavour, was trying to throw off the Austrian yoke. That same old dream again—an Italy united and free. Garibaldi left Caprera and joined the forces of Cavour. A new stream of youthful vigor in those old veins again. Once more at war, once more in love. He met a girl of nineteen, the Marchesina Rakmondi, laid a brief and impetuous siege to her heart, and married her (January, 1860).

A wintry marriage that ended in a sudden storm. A few days after the wedding he left her because he heard that she was still attached to a lover with whom she had had a former affair.

And now back to the battlefield. Greater activity than ever for that old brave heart. The liberation of Sicily; the emancipation of Naples; and finally, the overthrow of the Austrian yoke and the realization of Garibaldi's greatest dream—Italy united under a single sovereign, King Victor Emmanuel of the House of Savoy.

And the king's gratitude to Garibaldi for the outstanding part he had played in the unification of Italy? On October 26, 1860, Victor Emmanuel met Garibaldi and his little band of consecrated revolutionists. A cold and damp morning, a cold and damp greeting. After a condescending handshake the king rode by, followed by his royal troops in a pompous parade. Garibaldi and his sol-

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

diers, who had borne the brunt of the battles, were obliged to look upon this procession as outsiders. An English friend of his, Jessie White, was standing near him. "Jessie," remarked Garibaldi with a wry smile, "they are sending us to the rear!"

Always to the front in a fight. Always to the rear when the fight was over. "In worldly affairs," wrote the historian Michelet, "this man, loftier than fortune, had the divine stupidity of a hero." /

KARL MARX

Important Dates in Life of Karl Marx

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1818—Born in Germany. | 1859—Published <i>Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie</i> . |
| 1824—Baptized as Protestant. | 1864—Became head of the International Workingmen's Association. |
| 1841—Received degree of Doctor of Philosophy. | 1867—Published first volume of <i>Das Kapital</i> . |
| 1843—Married Jenny von Westphalen. | 1881—Death of wife. |
| 1847—Wrote, with Engels, the Communist Manifesto. | 1883—Death of Karl Marx in London. |
| 1849—Expelled from Prussia. Expelled from Paris, went to London. | |

Karl Marx

1818-1883



KARL (HEINRICH) MARX was born in Trier, on May 5, 1818. Both on his father's side and on his mother's, he was descended from a long line of Jewish rabbis. His father, however, a "very learned, very industrious, and very conscientious lawyer," had turned from Judaism to Free Thought and from Free Thought to Christianity. He had himself and his family baptized (1824) and accepted into the national evangelical church. He wanted to save his children from a tragic life, he said, by severing them from the persecuted Jewish race.

But his precaution was in vain. He couldn't sever his children from the persecuted *human* race. Two of his sons and two of his daughters died prematurely of tuberculosis; and his third and favorite son, Karl, survived to become the hero in one of the saddest stories of the nineteenth century. A genius to the world, perhaps; but to his mother, a disgrace. "If Karl had only *made* capital," she complained in her old age, "instead of merely *mocking* at it!"

II

YOUNG KARL was a brilliant scholar and impractical dreamer. As a high school student he dedicated his life to the least profitable of the professions—fellow-service. The least profitable but the most palatable. “If we choose the career in which we can do humanity the most good, burdens cannot overwhelm us, since they are nothing but sacrifices for the benefit of all . . . Experience rates him as the happiest who has made the greatest number happy; and religion itself teaches us the ideal for which we all strive—to sacrifice ourselves for humanity.”

To please his father, he became a disinterested student of law; but to please himself, he became an interested student of justice.

Yet there was nothing of the ascetic in him. He liked his card games, his drinks, and his duels.

And his *wunderschöne Loreleis*. Especially Jenny von Westphalen, the prettiest and the most brilliant of them all. Preposterous for the Jewish young student of eighteen to have fallen in love with “the princess of the Trier aristocracy.” But even more preposterous, the “princess” had fallen in love with Karl Marx. They were married after a courtship of seven years. And for the next thirty-eight years, until the day of Jenny’s death, they ate together “the bread of affliction”—very often there was no other bread in the house—and drank it down with the wine of an undying love. In spite of their sufferings, they were passionately devoted to each other to the very end.

In 1841, Karl Marx received his doctorate at the University of Jena. Whereupon he tried to get a position as a teacher of law. But everywhere he was turned down. “Too radical.” He had written a thesis on the materialistic philosophy of Epicurus. No room for free thinkers in Prussia. Nor for *any* thinkers, ancient or modern. One of the men responsible for the rejection of Karl Marx’s application for a teaching job was also responsible

for the suppression of the publication of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in German. "No comedy," declared this censor, "should be made of divine things."

Unable to be a teacher, Karl Marx became an agitator. Possessing a keen mind and a literary style that lashed like a flail, he threw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary movement of the day. And within a few months he rose to the leadership of radical thought. "You will be delighted," wrote the historian Moses Hess to the novelist, Berthold Auerbach, "to meet Karl Marx—the greatest, perhaps the *only real* philosopher now living . . . Though still a young man—only twenty-four at most—he combines the most profound philosophical earnestness with the most biting wit. Think of Rousseau, Voltaire, Holbach, Heine and Hegel fused into one—I say *fused*, not just lumped together—and you have Dr. Karl Marx."

Under the leadership of Karl Marx, the German intelligentsia had progressed from an aesthetic into a social rebellion. They were no longer satisfied with revolutionizing the rhythms of their poems and the plots of their dramas. They were now trying to bring about a revolution in the plot of life itself. The literary protest of Goethe had developed into the economic protest of Karl Marx.

In order to interpret this economic protest to the workers, Marx began to write a series of articles on the new social awakening. The paper in which these articles appeared was promptly suppressed, but Marx was not discouraged. He went to Paris and continued his barrage of anti-despotic and anti-theocratic essays and pamphlets. Already, in these early writings of his, we see the germs of his later philosophy. "Religion"—that is, the promise of heavenly reward for earthly privation—"is the opiate of the people." "Where the monarchical principle is in the majority, human beings are in the minority; where no one challenges the monarchical principle, there are no men at all." "Philosophers have done nothing more than interpret the world . . . Our business is to change it."

But Marx's desire to change the world clashed with the desire of the upper classes who were anxious to keep the world jogging along in its old leisurely and—to them—very satisfactory way. The German government charged him with high treason, and this charge divorced him automatically from his native land. To return to Trier, or to any other part of Germany, meant arrest and, possibly, death. His exile from Germany was followed by a decree of the French government that he must leave Paris. He went to Brussels, where he continued to educate the workers, to acquaint them with their rights, and to point out to them how they might best attain these rights. Man, he said, is the product of his environment. But he is also, if only he would realize it, the *producer* of his environment. History makes man, but man can also make history. In other words, we are the creators, as well as the creatures, of evolution.

This conception of man as being both the passive instrument and the active partner in the evolutionary process became the corner-stone of Marx's materialistic conception of history. In accordance with this conception, we can hasten the progress of the world by turning *evolution* into *revolution* whenever, in our judgment, this step becomes necessary.

The most important of all revolutions, according to Karl Marx, is the *social* revolution—that is, the uprising of the working class “which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying any of its advantages.”

All the earlier philosophers had dealt with the ultimate question of God. Karl Marx busied himself with the more immediate problem of the proletariat (the propertyless workingman—literally, the man who has many children). All history, he said, is a class struggle between the *haves* and the *have-nots*, the possessors and the dispossessed, the exploiters and the toilers, the masters and the slaves. “From time to time the workers are victorious, though their victory is fleeting.” Yet their organization is constantly growing stronger. Through the common (or com-

KARL MARX

munist) interests of the workers of the world, national lines are broken down and the movement becomes international. "The communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against extant social and political conditions . . . Communists scorn to hide their views and aims. They openly declare that their purpose can only be achieved by the forcible overthrow of the whole extant social order. Let the ruling classes tremble at the prospect of a communist revolution. Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

"Workers of the world, unite!"

III

THUS FAR the social theory of Karl Marx had much in common with that of the Italian liberator, Mazzini. Both of them advocated a world revolution in order to bring about the liberation of the masses. The *Communist Manifesto*, in which the idea of Marx receives its clearest and most vigorous interpretation, might easily have served as the rallying cry of Young Italy or of Young Europe. The chief difference between Mazzini and Marx was that Mazzini preached the gospel of freedom in accordance with the providential will of God, and Marx preached it in accordance with the providential design of destiny. For evolution is nothing but destiny cut into a scientific pattern.

Yet at this time Marx was still too much of a revolutionist to be a thoroughgoing scientist. His *Communist Manifesto*, written at a time (1848) when all Europe was in a turmoil of insurrection, was a flaming call to arms rather than a cold philosophical treatise. Marx had not as yet learned to base his philosophy of history upon a foundation of economics. His chief interest thus far was to stir up, rather than to educate, the workers of the world.

But the rulers of Europe wanted to keep the workers down. They looked upon Karl Marx as a disturber of the (autocratic and capitalistic) peace. Accordingly they tossed him about from

IVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

one country to another, until finally Marx found himself banished to England. This was in 1849.

(England, the most liberal of the European countries, was called "the mother of the exiles." Free from despotism, she was equally free from the fear of revolution. She could therefore afford to give a home to the homeless outcasts of the other nations. This impartial hospitality of the English government marks one of the most beautiful episodes in the history of the nineteenth century.)

When Marx arrived in London, he was penniless. Advocating the proletariat cause, he was himself a typical proletarian. Though hardly able to support himself, he was already blessed with three children—and a fourth was expected within a few weeks.

Let us for a moment glance at this prophet of the proletariat as he steps off the ship into his adopted country where he is destined to undergo so many sufferings. He is thirty-one years old at this time. "He has a thick crop of black hair, a huge round beard, hairy hands, an overcoat buttoned awry; but he appears like one endowed with the right and the power demanding respect, however he may look and whatever he may do. His movements are awkward, yet bold and self-confident. His manners conflict sharply with the ordinary conventions of social life. He is proud, somewhat contemptuous, and his harsh voice, with a metallic ring, is admirably suited to his revolutionary opinions about persons and things."

He is arrogant, conceited and irritable. He treats with sarcastic intolerance all those whose opinions are different from his own. His nerves are almost always on edge. Yet when he is able to relax, he becomes "unpretentious, gentle, tender, cordial, self-sacrificing and kind."

His irritability was due to his constant suffering. "The family of six"—we are quoting from Otto Ruhle's *Karl Marx*—"was packed into two small rooms, not knowing from day to day whether they would get food on the next. Clothing and shoes had

KARL MARX

been pawned. Marx had to keep in the house, for lack of a coat to go out in, and had no meat for dinner, as the butcher had refused further credit."

On Easter Day, 1852, one of his children died. "Our poor little Francisca fell ill with severe bronchitis," writes her mother. "For three days the poor child struggled with death. She suffered so terribly. When it was over, her little body rested in the small back room. At night, we lay down on the floor . . . The dear child's death happened at a time when we were in the direst need . . . A French refugee gave me two pounds. With this sum I was able to buy the coffin in which my poor child now lies at peace. She had no cradle when she came into the world, and for a long time it was difficult to find a box for her last resting place."

Poverty, hunger and disease had become the incessant visitors at the home of Karl Marx. Although he was one of the greatest writers of the century, he was unable to make a living by the pen. For he had a new religion to sell, and the invention of new religions is the most thankless business in the world. Very few were willing to read his iconoclastic ideas, and even fewer were ready to pay for them.

No prophet should ever marry. He who chooses to bear the cross has no right to lay his heavy burden upon the shoulders of little children. The whole family of Karl Marx would have gone under, were it not for the patient generosity of Friedrich Engels. Employed as a bookkeeper in his father's factory, and making but a scanty living himself, he poured his money again and again into the bottomless sieve of Marx's desperate needs. The whole-hearted sacrifice of Engels for the sake of Karl Marx and his family is one of the golden pages in the history of the human race. Throughout their long friendship there was an endless stream of pitiable appeals from Marx to Engels, and an endless, though slender, stream of funds from Engels to Marx. There was never a word of impatience, never a refusal. "I would rather cut off my thumb than ask you again for help," writes

LIVING BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN

Marx in one of his letters. And Engels replies, as usual, with a check for ten pounds, another check for fifteen pounds, a Christmas present of twenty-five pounds, and so on, and on, and on.

For Engels regarded his friendship with Marx as a business partnership for the liberation of humanity. Engels supplied the funds to keep Marx alive, and Marx worked on his great "Bible of the Proletariat"—*Das Kapital*. The publication of this book fell like a bombshell into the conventional circles of economic theory. What are the central ideas of Marx's revolutionary philosophy? We shall state them briefly.

IV

THE invention of machinery had brought into the world a new era—the Industrial Age. Money had become King. A new aristocracy of bankers, manufacturers and shop-keepers—the *Bourgeoisie*—had risen to the dominant position in the state. The old Landlord had given way to the modern Bond-baron, or Capitalist; and the vassals of the Feudal Age had been replaced by the wage slaves of the Industrial Age.

Now Ricardo, before Marx, had pointed out the fact that capitalism is based upon the exploitation of labor. He did not, however, explain the cause of this exploitation, nor did he offer any remedy for it. Karl Marx did both.

Labor, he said, is a commodity; and the purchaser of labor (that is, the employer), like the purchaser of any other commodity, tries to get it as cheaply as he can. The value of a commodity is measured by the cost of its production, and the value of labor is measured by the minimum amount of money necessary to keep the laborer alive and in working condition.

The capitalist's profit depends upon getting his labor as cheaply as possible. The difference between what the laborer produces and what he gets is the surplus value of labor—that is, the profit of the capitalist.

For to the capitalist—asserted Marx—labor is an impersonal

thing. The laborer is not a human being, but a *hand*. He is to be bought as cheaply as possible, and his product is to be sold as dearly as possible. This is a condition for which you cannot blame the capitalist any more than you can blame the laborer. Both of them are the tools of economic laws over which they have no control.

The laborer, then, gives more than he receives. He produces more than he consumes. And this inequality results in a peculiar state of affairs. There are more things made in the world than the makers are able to buy. These things keep on accumulating for several years, until finally it becomes necessary to put a stop to further production in order to allow the surplus commodities to be used up. Since no further goods are to be produced for the time being, the worker loses his job, his purchasing power diminishes, the accumulated goods cannot be sold, the overfilled store-houses cannot be emptied, *and the laborer starves because there is too much food in the world.*

This—declared Marx—is the tragic absurdity to which the capitalistic system has brought us! Unless we change this system, we are certain to experience a financial crisis once in every ten years. And it is interesting, though not a bit pleasant, to note that the prediction of Karl Marx was realized with uncanny regularity down to the tragic depression of the nineteen-thirties.

Fortunately, however, as Marx pointed out, the remedy lies in the nature of the disease itself. The development of bigger and ever bigger machinery brings about the concentration of capital in a few hands. "Let the workers take over the machinery and *work for themselves* . . . In this way, the many will no longer suffer because of the greed of the few." Whether we like it or not—he concludes—the concentration of capitalism is slowly but surely paving the way toward the realization of socialism, and the anarchy of the present system is but a necessary transition from the Feudalism of the past to the Coöperative Commonwealth of the Future.

Karl Marx laid his finger on the diseased spot in the present

economic system; very few will deny this fact. Whether or not he found the true remedy, it is impossible as yet to say. Let it be noted in passing, however, that Karl Marx was practically alone in predicting (1877) that the social revolution would come first in Russia—"that tsarist colossus with feet of clay." Nobody at that time realized how true a prophet he was. Today his economic doctrine is the accepted bible of the Russian Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

V

KARL MARX lived to see the first volume of his great work published. But before he could send the second and the third volumes to the press, "death struck the pen from his hand." For many years he had suffered, like Job, from virulent abscesses and carbuncles that attacked every part of his body. These were followed, in the last few years of his life, by excruciating headaches. In the fall of 1881 he suffered an attack of pleurisy. His wife was in another room, dying of cancer. He managed to get on his feet again, and went in to see her for the last time. Writing to a friend about this meeting, his daughter said: "Mother was in bed in the big front room, and Mohr (the family pet-name for Karl Marx) in the back room. These two, whose lives had been so closely intertwined, could no longer be together. Mohr got over his illness. I shall never forget the morning when he felt strong enough to go into mother's room. It was as if they had been quite young again—she a loving girl and he a loving youth, entering upon life together, instead of an old man ravaged by illness, and a dying old woman, taking leave of one another forever."

Frau Marx died on December 2, 1881. Fifteen months later he followed her.